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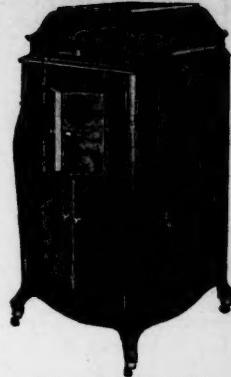
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Ainslee's for October

When the ordinary magazine gets together half a dozen or so good short stories in any one issue, it announces the result in boastful type upon its cover as a "Special Fiction Number." Did you ever stop to think that every number of AINSLEE'S is much more of a "Special Fiction Number?"

Consider AINSLEE'S for October: three novelettes, complete, and eleven short stories, every one of them admirably fulfilling the first of AINSLEE'S requirements—they entertain.

Izola Forrester contributes the first and longest of the novelettes. "The Sunshine Widow" is the name of this breezy Western romance, although as a matter of fact the charming heroine doesn't become even a potential widow until near the close.

H. F. Prevost-Battersby's "Passing the Love of Woman," deals with the subtle warfare between a loyal man and a fascinating woman over the destiny of another man. It has seldom been our privilege to print a more vital tale than this one.

The third novelette in the October number is "Taking Hostages from Cæsar," by Thomas Addison. We believe that in its way this will attract almost as widespread attention as did Mr. Addison's first contribution to AINSLEE'S, "St. Anthony's Vision," which has just been dramatized.

The short stories alone in AINSLEE'S for October seem to us to form an unanswerable argument for magazine entertainment as opposed to magazine "uplift." Margaretta Tuttle, Alice MacGowan, in collaboration with Malcolm Wheelock Strong, Frank Condon, Anna Alice Chapin, Nalbro Bartley, Elliott Flower, Berton Braley, James Oliver Curwood, E. M. Jameson, Rina Ramsay and Samuel Gordon—all in one number of a magazine.

A darky once said that nothing could possibly be better than watermelon. "Less'n," he added doubtfully, scratching his wool, "less'n yo' might happen t' find a *bettah watahmillion*."

It may be just our natural enthusiasm for the thing we have been working over last, but we feel that this coming AINSLEE'S is a shade better than even AINSLEE'S usually is. Of one thing we are positive: It *does* entertain.

THE OCTOBER AINSLEE'S

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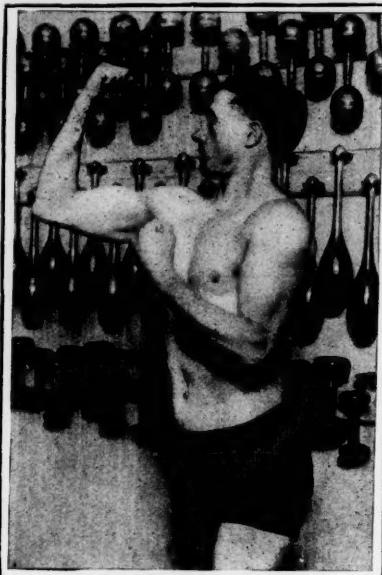
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M EASUREMENTS show these two men to be of equal muscular development. But a lifting test shows the blacksmith to be 20 per cent. the stronger man. The explanation of this difference in strength is that the "professor" of physical culture has by the use of his "system" of gymnastics developed his muscles alone, while the blacksmith by actual work at his trade has developed not only his muscles but the tendons which attach the muscles to the bones. Ability to do work is the real test of strength.

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Vol. XIV

No. 1



SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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The Inspired Story
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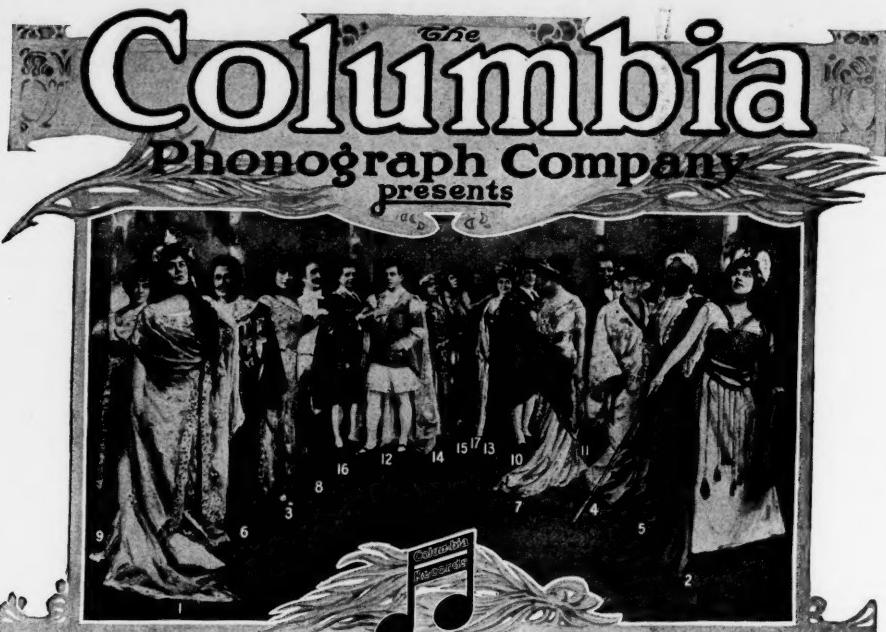


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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 14

OCTOBER, 1911

NUMBER 1

PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES

OF
SINGER
FAVORITES

MISS
JULIA
MARLOWE

PHOTO BY
SCHAUSS-PETTON
KANSAS CITY -





MISS FAY WALLACE
In "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford"

Photo by White, N. Y.

W



MISS SALLIE FISHER
In "The Heart Breakers"

Photo by Moffitt, Chicago

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MISS ELEANOR KENT
With the Aborn Opera Company

Photo by Apela Studio, N. Y.

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MISS MURIEL STARR
With Wilton Lackaye

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MISS VIOLA CLARK
At the Folies Bergere

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MISS JOSEPHINE VICTOR

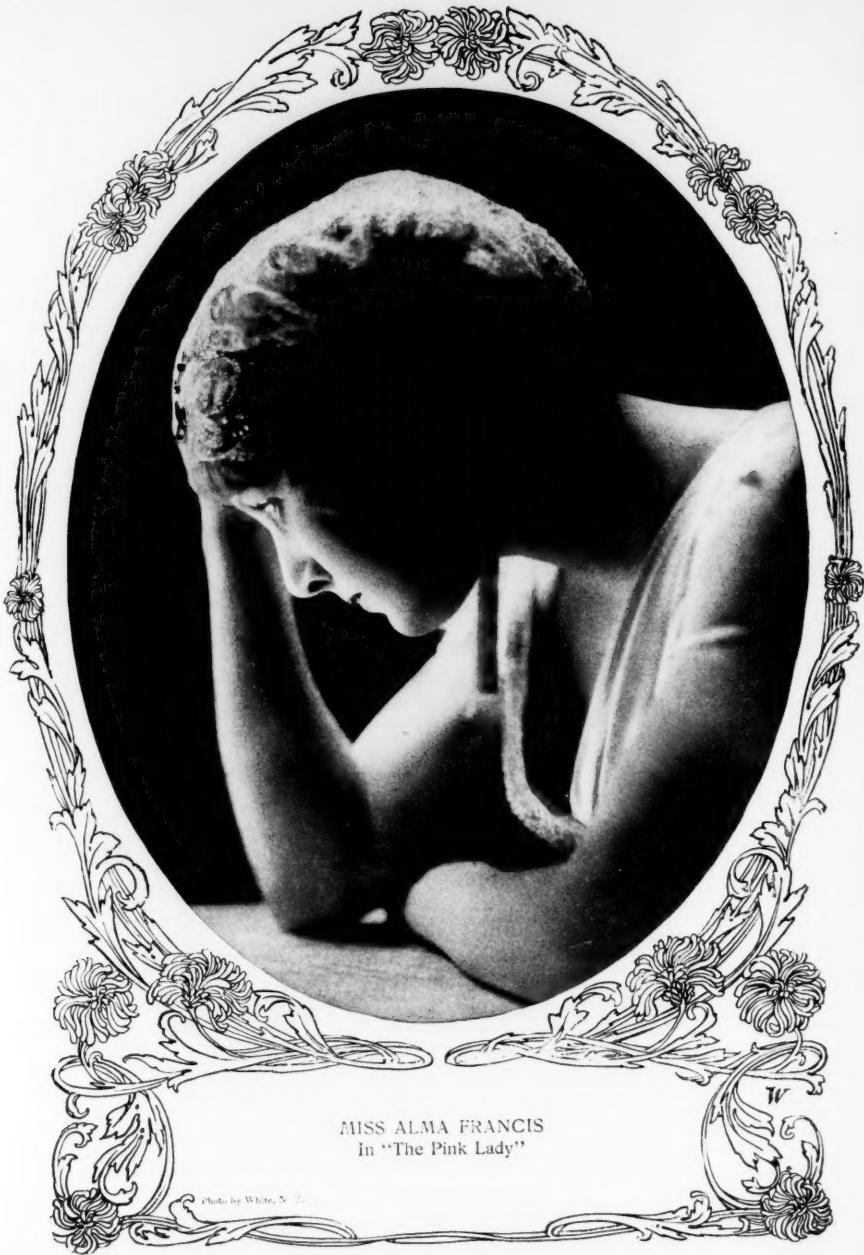
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MISS FRANCES CARSON
At the Folies Bergere

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MISS ALMA FRANCIS
In "The Pink Lady"

Photo by White, N.Y.



MISS JEAN MURDOCK
In "Seven Sisters"

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MISS IVY TROUTMAN
In "Baby Mine"

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MISS MABEL HITE
In "A Certain Party"

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At the Folies Bergere

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MISS LAURETTE TAYLOR
To appear in a new play

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MISS FRANCES RING
In "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford"

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MISS GERTRUDE HOFFMAN
At the Winter Garden

Photo by Bangs, N. Y.

W

WILHELMINA CHANGES HER MIND

BY
FLORENCE
MORSE
KINGSLEY

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBT. A. GRAEF



CHAPTER I.

WHEN it is written of Wilhelmina Warford that she resembled, in a certain salient particular, the Mary who once cultivated a garden, where silver bells and cowslips were said to be arranged in orderly rows bordered with shells of the cockle, all has not been said. It must be frankly admitted that Miss Warford was, on occasions, and with due provocation, contrary. But this is merely another way of stating that she frequently preferred and insisted upon having her own way, in preference to following the expressed wishes of Mr. Baldwin Carr and Miss Minerva.

Mr. Baldwin Carr and Miss Minerva Carr were both elderly, but otherwise blameless persons; and some fifteen years previous to the beginning of this history they had been appointed by

Providence and the order of the court as joint guardians of Miss Warford's person and fortune. After a comparatively short experience as parents-in-the-eye-of-the-law it became a settled practice with the two to pretend that they had no opinions; that is, they gave up advancing theories which could in any particular clash with those of Wilhelmina. It was the easiest and perhaps the wisest course for quiet, peace-loving, self-indulgent persons to adopt, and they chose it without hesitation, after a few tentative attempts to "govern Wilhelmina."

That they did not realize their down-trodden condition in the least, and were even happy and comfortable, enjoying their food and such pleasures and diversions as came their way, was entirely due to the color of Miss Warford's eyes—a brilliant, daylight brown. It would have been impossible to lead a

nervous, elderly opinion up to those eyes, and not have it shy. Besides the brown eyes, one should mention a quantity of curling, sun-colored hair, a dazzling complexion, and a haughty little figure.

The reasons for thus carefully laying down the premises will become apparent later on; but these should be kept constantly in mind, since if the imperfect statements regarding Miss Warford's personal appearance do not account for the opinionless condition of Mr. Carr and Miss Minerva, as well as for the more or less singular events which took place about the time of the young woman's twentieth birthday, nothing will.

In the evening of the day on which Wilhelmina Warford graduated from the Misses Blotchford's Select Seminary for young ladies she refused one and one-half proposals of marriage. The reasons for the fractional proposal being that Miss Warford had been obliged to divide every one of her dances, and that Mr. James Bigelow found it difficult to conclude the introductory remarks leading up to the avowal he had clearly in mind.

He had known Wilhelmina for a long time—reaching away back into the era of short frocks, and knickerbockers, and children's parties, and select dancing schools, and he had been in love with her every minute of the time.

On the occasion of the Misses Blotchford's annual reception, where Jimmy in his impervious, satin-lined, stiff-bosomed, high-collared, and cravated misery came at last upon Wilhelmina attired in diaphanous white, and sitting under a cool-looking palm, idly coqueting with a spangled fan, he could hardly believe in his good luck. She appeared to be unattended, and she welcomed him with one of her cruelest—which is to say sweetest—smiles.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," quoth Jimmy, plumping down into the empty chair at her side. "Let me fan you."

But she was sadly wise.

"You'd only break my fan," she said, without a shred of sympathy.

"Er—I suppose I should," admitted Jimmy, stealthily wiping the perspiration from his forehead, with his third, overworked handkerchief. "Warm, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," murmured Miss Warford. "I'm not uncomfortable."

He bore the insult meekly, and as a matter of course.

"To think," he said, gazing appreciatively at her cool white arms lightly veiled with lacy stuff, "that you're out of school—for good, is it? Or have you changed your mind about going to college?"

"I wouldn't study another day for worlds!" declared Wilhelmina. "Uncle Baldy says I know enough now; and I think so, too, for everything I shall want to do."

Jimmy Bigelow's heart beat hard within his honest bosom. This appeared to be an opening. He plunged into it as recklessly as he would have gone into a glorious scrimmage in football.

"Let me tell you what you're going to do," he proposed, in a stifled sort of voice, which he tried his best to make cool and "nervy."

He had found out somehow that Miss Warford thoroughly disliked shrinking timidity and that sort of thing.

"I believe I—er—know," he went on, rather breathlessly.

"You do?" wondered she, gazing up at him with the adorable innocence of a kitten, which is ready to scratch on the instant. "Why, I haven't even told Uncle Baldy. I'm perfectly worn out with awfully hard studying," was her next remark, accompanied by a distracting smile, "and I must have a change."

"I'm going to graduate, too," he said, "and I don't know as you'll care, but I've made Phi Beta."

"You have?" she exclaimed. "Isn't that splendid! How proud your mother must be, and your father, too."

"Yes, they are, of course," he conceded, in the tone of a half orphan.

He waited hopefully for her next words.

"Let me think," she pondered. "They

make you wear a funny sort of watch key, don't they?"

"Er—something of the sort, I believe."

"And of course everybody has stem-winding watches," she pursued sweetly. "One would think they might invent something nicer, a diamond ring, or a—"

"Willy," he said—everybody had contracted the habit of calling her Willy in her childhood; she had only resented it for a matter of a year and a half—"would you like a diamond ring—a regular winner—as big, say, as my shirt stud, and—"

"Uncle Baldy and Aunt Minerva gave me a perfectly lovely one for a graduating present," she interrupted. "I meant to show it to you."

And she kindly pulled off her glove.

He looked up from a frowning inspection of the row of diamonds on her hand to see his best friend, Richard Barstow, approaching with two saucers of pink ice cream.

"Ah, Dick," he murmured calmly; and got to his feet with a hypocritical smile on his lips and rage in his heart.

"How perfectly delicious!" cried Miss Warford, who was still childishly fond of congealed sweet stuff. She was eating it, the diamonds twinkling merrily on her slim hand—the spoon hand Jimmy remembered, with a slight alleviation of his feelings as he walked away.

It was nearly an hour later when he again discovered her snugly ensconced under a rubber plant with Perkins, a particularly odious and presuming undergraduate, who had been neglected in his freshman year by those who should have pummeled the freshness out of him.

"Our dance, I believe," said Jimmy, in a lordly tone, calculated to crush the presumptuous Perkins.

"In just a minute," she said sweetly. "Mr. Perkins is telling me such a deliciously funny story."

Whereat Perkins broke in with an idiotic: "He-he! It was rather good, doncherknow, Miss Warford. And I

was goin' t' tell you the way we took it out on old Ledly—"

Mr. Bigelow became suddenly interested, not to say absorbed, in something he appeared to discover on the opposite side of the room.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly. "I'll be back in one moment."

He punished her by laboriously stretching the one moment into three and a quarter. Then he returned, offered her his arm sternly, and bore her away from Perkins without a word of apology. He didn't ask her if she wanted to dance. Instead he led her directly to the "conservatory," a barren spot, where the little girls recited geography on week days, and a fly-specked globe, representing the arena of our mortal activities, guarded the solitude on Sundays.

"I want to talk to you," he offered, by way of explanation.

"But I prefer to dance," she said, surveying him with a displeased pucker between her brows. This was equivalent to "I won't listen," as Jimmy knew very well.

"But I—"

"Hush!" she commanded. "They're playing the barn dance. Let's go."

"You said you hated the barn dance," he reminded her unskillfully. "Only last Friday you wouldn't—"

"That was because I was obliged to dance with you, and you were disagreeable," she retaliated.

He took the bit in his teeth then, and in the tortuous mazes of the barn dance contrived to tell her that he adored her, that he always had adored her, and always would, and, furthermore, that he wanted her to be his wife.

"You stepped on my foot," she complained.

He knew he hadn't, but he apologized profusely.

"Will you?" he urged.

"Will I what?" she wanted to know. "Look, you nearly bumped me into that horrid window!"

He stopped short, and drew her through the specified window into a secluded little balcony, where at the moment only two or three other couples

had taken refuge from the madding crowd without.

"You must answer me," he said sternly.

"Must?" she echoed, with an expression which would have apprised the experienced Mr. Baldwin Carr of the fact that he was overstepping certain well-defined bounds.

"Yes; *must!*" repeated Jimmy, quite magnificent in his young hardihood and defiance of all known laws.

Even Wilhelmina admired him for the moment. She couldn't help it.

"You will, won't you, dear?" he whispered, with a fatal lapse into a suppliant tone and attitude.

"No," she said, "I will not. You ought to know better than to mention anything so absurd!"

And she smoothed down her ruffled plumage and preened herself, with the air of an injured angel.

"I think it was horrid of you," she went on, "just when I was having such a good time, too."

"Horrid—of me—to tell you I loved you?"

"Yes, horrid! I don't want you to love me."

"You can't help it," he reminded her, with vain triumph. "I do love you, and I shall love you as long as you live."

"That is ridiculous," she said crisply. "Suppose I should live to be as old as Aunt Minerva, and wear a lot of horrid false hair—a complete transformation, as she calls it, and have my teeth crowned, and neuralgia every time it rained?"

This required a painful stretch of the imagination, but he hastily assured her that his affection would stand the proposed and every other possible test.

"Anyway, I shan't allow you to love me," was her crushing reply. "It would be tiresome, I know."

"But you might get used to it, if you tried," he suggested hopefully.

"I might—in time. But why should I try, when I don't in the least want to? Don't let's talk about it."

"But after a while—don't you think you might change your mind? You like me, don't you?"

"Part of the time; and part of the time I don't," she said heartlessly. "But you may as well stop liking me. I'm going away."

"Going away?" he echoed, a look of blank dismay clouding his ingenuous good looks. "Where?"

"I don't know where exactly," she told him, with an airy flirt of her span-gled fan. "But I'm going next week, and I shall be gone ages."

Then she insisted upon going back to



There was the sound of a carefully suppressed giggle from above, and he looked up to see Alicia Gillette's charming head.



the dancing floor, where two perspiring youths pounced upon her at once, each claiming the dance then in progress.

CHAPTER II.

Miss Warford chose the hour just before dinner on the following evening for acquainting her elderly and heretofore submissive relatives with her post-graduate plans. Mr. Baldwin Carr was reading the evening paper, and Miss Minerva was placidly knitting one of an indefinite series of breakfast jackets, when Wilhelmina floated into the room. She had slept like an infant till twelve, and, after luncheon, of which she had partaken with admirable appetite, she had played four games of tennis. A bath and a toilet had further restored her spirits and the brightness of her eyes.

"Hello, Billy! How goes it?" remarked Mr. Carr, who sometimes indulged in jocosity of a harmless sort. "Did you get rested after your party?"

Miss Warford perched on the arm of his chair, and bestowed the ghost of a kiss on top of his bald head.

"I wasn't a bit tired," she said. "I could have danced till daylight."

Mr. Carr looked searchingly at her over the top of his spectacles.

"Could—eh? Well, that's good!"

Wilhelmina pulled his hair gently.

"Listen, Uncle Baldy," she said, "and I'll tell you what I've made up my mind

to do. I've talked it over with the girls, and they are simply wild about it. We'd like to start next week, or—this is only Thursday; I don't see why we couldn't go by Saturday. We could buy the cars to-morrow, and we shan't need many new clothes."

"Buy the what?"

"The automobiles, dear. I want three, and we've decided to have one bright red, one dark green, and the other either navy blue or one of those stylish grays. I really believe gray would be more becoming to me than anything else. Margery likes red best, and I've promised Vivian the one she rides in shall be green, because she's obliged to wear green veils when she motors, on account of her eyes."

Mr. Carr took three strong puffs on his pipe as a sort of strengthening preliminary, then he said cautiously:

"You're indulging in a little light and airy persiflage at my expense, aren't you, Billy? Er—three touring automobiles all at once is a bit severe on a poor old uncle, isn't it?"

"But I don't mean to do it at your expense, Uncle Baldy," Wilhelmina assured him. "I want to use my own money."

"Your own—yes, yes. Er—I see. So you—"

"It's awfully improving to travel. Miss Blotchford and Miss Harriet have organized a travel class, and at first Alicia and I thought we'd like to go."

"Well, why not?" interrupted Mr. Carr, and Miss Minerva, who had been a mildly interested listener, chirped timidly:

"Miss Harriet Blatchford spoke to me last night about Mina's going abroad with them, and I promised to consult you, brother."

Miss Warford tossed her head, a dangerous sparkle in her brown eyes.

"The idea!" she said indignantly. "I told Miss Harriet I had decided not to go more than a week ago. Alicia and I talked it over with the girls, and we're sure it would be worse than school to go abroad with them. So I've invited

nine of our set to go with me, and they've all accepted."

"But, my dear," began Miss Minerva, in the feeble tone of remonstrance with which Wilhelmina was perfectly familiar, "it would never do, you know, for a number of young girls to—"

"We're going to take you, aunty. You're a perfect dear as a chaperon; all the girls think so," Miss Warford told her triumphantly.

Mr. Baldwin Carr knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and stuffed it full of fresh tobacco.

"I'm afraid it won't do, Billy," he said, shaking his head. "Guess you'll have to compromise on the educational tour."

"Uncle Baldy, listen to me!" commanded Miss Warford. "Didn't you tell me I was going to be a rich woman some day? You know you did; that was the way you took to get me to study interest, and taxes, and all that uninteresting stuff in arithmetic. And now I'm through school, and want to have a little fun with my own money, I don't see why I shouldn't do it."

"Now, as to that," began Mr. Carr uncomfortably, "I'll have to explain to you—"

"Haven't I got any money?" demanded Wilhelmina excitedly. "Were you just joking when you said it? Because, if you were—"

"No, no, my dear. I wasn't joking, but—"

"Then I don't see—"

"By the terms of the will," went on Mr. Carr, "you only enjoy a moderate income from your property till—"

He paused to pat the girl's fingers, gently and soothingly.

"Your grandfather meant it for the best, my dear, and you'll say so yourself some day, if you don't now."

"Tell me quick, Uncle Baldy!"

"Well, then, the truth of the matter is, that you can't have your money till you're thirty-five years old, unless—"

"Thirty-five years old!" echoed Wilhelmina. "Why, when I'm that old I—I shan't care for anything!"

"Oh, yes, you will, my dear," contradicted Miss Carr kindly. "Why, I am

all of forty, and I'm sure I enjoy everything as much as I ever did."

Miss Warford's brown eyes flashed unutterable remarks in the direction of Miss Minerva.

"A will," observed Mr. Carr, with stealthy enjoyment of the truth of his statement, "is one of those things you can't get around. A man can say what he likes in his will, and once he is dead nobody can make him change his mind."

He even went so far as to chuck Wilhelmina under the chin, quite as if she was not bubbling, seething, boiling, and otherwise effervescent with speechless indignation.

"Eh, Billy?" he rallied her jocosely.

"If I could talk with Grandfather Warford for just five minutes," she cried, "I know I could make him change his mind."

Mr. Carr puffed gayly at his pipe.

"I'll bet on you, Billy, every time!" he declared.

"Baldwin, I am surprised at you!" murmured Miss Minerva reprovingly. "One would suppose you were in the habit of placing wagers."

"I am," said Mr. Carr unblushingly, "when it's on Billy's having her own way."

"You said 'unless,'" Miss Warford suddenly recollects. "What did you mean by 'unless'?"

"Oh—er—that proviso is quite out of the question yet a while," temporized Mr. Carr. "I'll tell you what I'll do, child! I'll buy a touring car, and I'll take you and Aunt Nervy anywhere you want to go on this side of the Atlantic. I'll take Alicia along, too, if you like."

"You didn't tell me what you meant by 'unless,'" persisted Miss Warford, intent as a terrier. "I think I have a right to know."

"Well, if you must hear it," grumbled Mr. Carr, "though I'd rather not put such notions in your head yet a while, it is simply this: You get your money on the day you marry, or in any case when you've reached the age of thirty-five."

"Now, why," demanded Wilhelmina indignantly, "should Grandfather War-

ford have invented anything so ridiculous?"

Her bright brown eyes ordered Mr. Carr to explain at once.

Haltingly he strove to obey.

"A man," he said, "is—er—supposed to know how to look after property better than a woman. For example, a man of moderate fortune would hardly deem it advisable to invest a considerable sum in the purchase of three motor cars at one time, when—"

He stopped short, the better to observe the astonishing change which had come over Miss Warford's speaking countenance.

Wilhelmina was undeniably charming, even when she pouted angrily; but when chagrin and ruffled temper without any apparent reason gave place to happiness, pleasure, and delight, the change was quite as well worth looking at as a vivid rainbow after a storm, or a gleam of sunshine on a rain-drenched rose, or any other beautiful and remarkable transition of the natural world.

"I've just thought of something," was her simple explanation of the dazzling phenomenon.

After she had gone upstairs in a flutter of haste, Mr. Baldwin Carr looked across at Miss Minerva, who returned his wordless appeal with a perturbed sigh.

"What do you suppose the child's up to now, Nervy?" he inquired.

"Dear me, Baldwin, why should you ask me?" disclaimed Miss Carr, with a large gesture of her knitting needles. "As if I ever pretended to know!"

On that same evening Mr. James Bigelow had sternly withdrawn himself from human companionship, for the avowed purpose of boning on his commencement oration. He had watched his idol from afar that afternoon playing tennis with "that ass Perkins," and had smoked five furious pipes in rapid succession, reminding himself with grim pleasure that she disliked tobacco. It appeared to Jimmy that there was nothing left in the universe for which to live; but there yet remained in the hollow void his Latin salutatory, beginning:

"Nunc tempus adsit, amici, in orbis saeculorum—"

How long, he wondered gloomily, would the human body withstand mental tortures of the sort he had been enduring? One year, or ten? It wouldn't matter to him.

He was deep in the consideration of this vital problem, when there came a knock at the portal of his solitude, which he very properly ignored. Then a small, pale-blue note was shoved under the door.

He picked it up, of course.

"I have changed my mind," were the five electrifying words he read, in Wilhelmina's characteristic schoolgirl hand.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Baldwin Carr himself opened the door to Mr. Bigelow's agitated ring.

"Why, hello, Jimmy," was his hearty greeting. "Glad to see you. Come right in."

Mr. Carr was genuinely fond of young people, and he had a way of appearing to think that Jimmy, as well as other countless admirers of Wilhelmina, came to his house for the particular purpose of talking over politics, baseball, or football with himself. Miss Minerva had expostulated vainly with her brother for taking this perverted view of things, pointing out to him with feminine perspicacity that in all probability Richard Barstow, George Perkins, and Jimmy Bigelow came to see Wilhelmina, and that they would much prefer conversing with Wilhelmina in the dimly lighted, carpeted, curtained, upholstered, and bric-a-braced seclusion which Miss Minerva called "the parlor," to remaining in the garishly cheerful library with the family.

"I always received my young gentlemen friends in the parlor, Baldwin," she would say.

"Yes, I know you did, Nervy," was Mr. Carr's brotherly rejoinder, "an' you ain't married yet, I notice."

On the present occasion Mr. Carr bore Jimmy Bigelow before him on the breeze of welcome right into the cheerful radiance of the library, where Miss

Minerva was still placidly engaged in the manufacture of breakfast jackets.

"Sit down, sit down, old man!" cried Uncle Baldwin, slapping Jimmy on the shoulder with exuberant cheerfulness. "What do you say to a game of chess?"

"Er—thank you, Mr. Carr," muttered Jimmy, with a sudden absurd sinking of the heart. He had observed with one comprehensive glance that Wilhelmina was nowhere to be seen.

He sat down stiffly, watching Mr. Carr's agile movements as he got out the chess table, with anguished eyes.

It was Miss Minerva who noticed the young man's unusual perturbation. She arose with a gentle rustle of her silken skirts.

"Wilhelmina just went upstairs a minute ago," she said. "I'll call her."

Jimmy sprang to his feet, with the ostensible purpose of politely opening the door for Miss Carr.

"I—I should like to speak to Willy," he murmured.

Miss Minerva bent her head; a little, triumphant smile played about her lips.

"Perhaps you'd like to step across to the parlor?" she suggested.

And Jimmy thankfully slid out of the room in her ample wake, without so much as a look behind.

A full account of the brief interview between Miss Warford and Mr. Bigelow would have properly presented a picture of Jimmy, planted in the middle of the awe-inspiring parlor, anguish and uncertainty in his heart, and a stony calm upon his brow. Enter Wilhelmina, a naughty smile upon her charming lips.

"Oh, is that you, Jimmy? I thought perhaps you'd come over."

Mr. Bigelow, in a tone carefully poised between rapturous bliss and stern reproach, said:

"Yes, I got your note, and I didn't wait a minute. Oh, Willy, what did you mean by 'I have changed my mind'?"

Wilhelmina looked at him meditatively. He was very tall and strong, and she felt that he must be managed with care.

"If you will sit down—there," she

said, indicating a massive armchair, "I will tell you."

"Why must I sit down?"

"Because I want you to. I shan't say a word about what I meant unless you do."

He obeyed.

She preferred, it seemed, to stand, and she chose an entrenched position behind a table loaded with the cherished trifles of several generations of Carrs.

"In the first place, I may as well say right out that I haven't changed my mind in the least about what I told you last night. I don't like you one bit better than I did, but—I'll marry you if you like."

"Willy!" shouted Mr. Bigelow, flying out of his chair with uncontrollable rapture. "You darling girl!"

But she eluded him successfully.

"If you touch me," she threatened, "I shall call Uncle Baldy."

"But, dearest—"

"I was afraid you'd be a goose," she pouted. "Are you going to sit down and listen to me, or not?"

"I'll listen—yes. But first, do you realize what you said just now, or was it one of your little jokes? I must insist upon knowing!"

She burst into one of her ringing laughs.

"Oh, you are too funny!" she said. "Of course I meant it. But perhaps, after I've told you why I changed my mind, you'll back out."

"Do you mean—"

"You said you loved me, and that you'd do anything in the world for me."

"I do!" exploded Jimmy, unable to repress the seething tide of his emotions. "And I will!"

"We shall see," returned Miss Warford coolly.

Then she proceeded to acquaint him with her frustrated plans, and the brilliant idea which had occurred to her in the very middle of Mr. Carr's explanation of the nature of the obstacle which intervened between herself and complete happiness in the shape of three touring cars of differing hues.

"All of a sudden I remembered what you said," she told him, "and I thought

if you really did love me as much as you said you did, why, I wouldn't mind letting you marry me."

He stared at her from under gathered brows.

"Of course, I should drive your car," he said.

"I'm awfully sorry," she murmured regretfully. "If I'd thought of it in the first place I might have arranged it. But I'm afraid I couldn't take you. I promised Gladys Perkins that George should drive one of the cars; her mother wouldn't let her go without."

"I like that!" he exploded, the veins on his forehead beginning to swell.

"I thought you would," she approved. "George is such a careful driver, and you're rather careless, you know."

"Well," he conceded, "there are two other cars, you say?"

"Alicia Gillette means to take their chauffeur for one," she told him. "He knows exactly what to do when the motor breaks down or anything happens to the tires. And it isn't announced yet, but Alicia just got engaged to Dick Barstow, so I've promised to take him. Alicia wouldn't go without Dick."

Her expression was almost holy in its sweetness. She appeared to expect praise for her thoughtfulness.

He took two steps toward the door.

"Don't hurry," she said politely, "though of course you'll want time to think it over, and—"

He came back hastily, and, before she had time to circumvent him, had contrived to possess himself of both her hands.

"As I understand it," he said, "you'll marry me right away, so as to get your money. Then you propose to leave me behind and go off to Europe with the girls, and—and Dick Barstow, and that ass Perkins, and—"

"Don't forget the Gillette's chauffeur and Aunt Nervy; we're to have a chaperon, of course," she reminded him. "I wish you'd remember that you've got a terrible grip, Jimmy."

He swallowed hard.

"What about when you get back, Willy?"

She pulled herself away from him, with a petulant little exclamation.

"I can't see any use of discussing that now," she interrupted coldly. "I can think what to do about it while I'm gone. There'll be plenty of time. Now, when could we have the wedding?"

He gasped wordlessly in the face of this practical inquiry.

"The wedding?" he echoed.

"I suppose we'll have one, the same as other people, unless you want to back out. Do you?"

He looked at her beseechingly.

"I—I love you so!" he murmured. "And this—oh, Willy!"

He stooped and kissed her masterfully.

"Now, that," said Wilhelmina, whipping her hands behind her indignantly, "will do! I don't like kissing!"

"I know you don't, Willy," he acknowledged, out of the depths of a humiliating past. "But this once!"

He appeared anxious to make it twice, but her eyes warned him in time.

"I haven't bought my cars yet," she told him, with delightful confidence. "You can help me pick them out."

He thanked her gravely.

"I suppose I'll have to speak to the folks at home about it," he said doubtfully.

"I haven't told Uncle Baldy," she sighed.

"Suppose I tell Mr. Carr," he volunteered.

"Oh, will you? Well, Uncle Baldy will understand just how I feel about it. If he doesn't I can make him."

"Er—Willy, now I want to make a bargain with you."

"What is it?"

"Only this: I don't want to have every old maid in town know just how this thing is going to be pulled off. It would be awfully unpleasant for both of us to have our little scheme talked over. Don't you see it would?"

"Why, I don't see anything so very funny about it. Who would say anything, I'd like to know?"

"Everybody would, you'd find," he warned her out of his superior knowledge of the world. "And you'd hate it."



So should I. Suppose we keep it just to ourselves, and pretend—just pretend that it's exactly like everybody else's wedding. It'll be a lot pleasanter."

"I should hate to have Aunt Nervy lecturing me every minute, and Uncle Baldy arguing—do you suppose they would, Jimmy?"

"Of course they would; they wouldn't give you a minute's peace, and probably my mother would take a hand in the——"

A vision of the stately, dignified, not to say awe-inspiring matron who figured as Jimmy's mother rose before Miss Warford's mental vision. Curiously enough, Mrs. Bigelow was the one person in all the world of whom Wilhelmina felt the least afraid.

"How could we—pretend?" she asked, with encouraging meekness.

The watchful Jimmy instantly took advantage of this unnatural submissiveness.

"Why, it would be perfectly simple," he explained. "Announce our engagement, and we'll go everywhere together—we'll have to do that, you know. And you can act as if you liked me; and I'll pretend I'm devoted to you. And then we'll have a regular blowout of a wedding, and you can have the girls for bridesmaids. You'll want Alicia for

maid of honor, and I'll ask Dick to be best man. They'll like that."

Miss Warford appeared lost in meditation for all of two minutes. Then she glanced at him thoughtfully.

"I believe I could do it," she said, rather incoherently. "It would be fun for us, when we know everything ourselves."

"Of course it would," he agreed, with carefully subdued enthusiasm.

"But you must remember I'm only pretending when I act as if I liked you. And if I want to play tennis with George Perkins, or any of the others, you are not to sulk, or——"

"Oh, yes; I'll have to, don't you see, in order to have it appear natural. I'll not stand it to have you look at another fellow—that is, when I'm around. And I shall be around most of the time, you'll find."



"That'll do, sur. They ain't nobody to home, in case you wanted to know."

He pulled an infinitesimal box from his pocket.

"Of course you'll be obliged to wear this," he observed, as he produced a handsome solitaire from its satin nest.

And he boldly slipped it on her finger.

She regarded him smilingly; then suspiciously; then she turned the accusing gaze of two lovely eyes full upon him.

"Jimmy Bigelow," she said, "I want you to tell me the truth. When did you buy this ring?"

"Er—on my way over here," he prevaricated. "I was hoping from the tone of your note—"

"My note," she informed him, "had no tone. I simply said I'd changed my mind."

She looked dangerous.

"I don't think I care about wearing two diamond rings. And this is such a big one."

"Nonsense!" he replied carelessly. "Mother wears a dozen."

Then he bade her good night, very calmly and coolly, and went away.

CHAPTER IV.

A number of annoying engagements kept Jimmy Bigelow from the more pressing business on hand till late in the afternoon of the following day. But the hour of four found him closeted with Mr. Baldwin Carr in the private office of the latter gentleman.

"I thought there was something up last night," observed Mr. Carr, trying to look particularly severe, and not succeeding any better than usual, "and I said so to Nervy."

"But I haven't told you everything that Willy said," confessed Jimmy. "Er—I wonder if I'd better."

And he looked beseechingly at Wilhelmina's legal guardian.

Mr. Carr shrugged his shoulders.

"If you could tell me everything that Willy said," he began, with an attempt at persiflage.

But Jimmy had resolved to make a clean breast of it, and he was already deep in his recital of the conversation between himself and Wilhelmina.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Carr, when Jimmy had finished. Then he frowned and said: "H'm!" After a musing silence he raised his eyebrows, wrinkled his forehead, smote his knee a resounding clap, and syllabified: "Upon my word!"

"Anyway, she's consented to marry me," submitted Jimmy.

"I—er—congratulate you, my boy," murmured Mr. Carr, shaking his head.

"Thank you, sir," said Jimmy.

"The only trouble," burst out Mr. Carr, after a further period devoted to reflection, "is that you never can tell from one minute to the next what Billy will do. I'm afraid we've spoiled her a little. But Billy—why, that girl has got a way with her! I'd defy Solomon, or—or any other' old chap to stand up and say 'no' to Billy. Frankly, I—I never could do it. But if I were in your place I would—"

He paused, to shake his head.

"I'd—yes, by George, I would. I'd go on with it, and—er—see how it turns out. Something might come up, you know, so that you could persuade her to—"

"That's what I'd thought of doing," said Jimmy, with modest pride.

"There's nobody I'd rather trust Billy to than you, if we've got to give her up; and I've said so more than once lately to Nervy. Suppose I have a little talk with Billy, and—"

"You mustn't say a word to her about it!" warned Jimmy. "I told you, because I thought you ought to know; but you must leave me to manage Willy, and the wedding, and all that."

"Manage—Willy? And the wedding? And— Let me say again that I admire your pluck. You're the one man I should have picked out for my girl. Well, all I've got to say is that you can trust me, my boy. Er—perhaps I'd better tell you, Billy came to me this morning, and asked me to lend her a thousand dollars."

"Did you do it?"

"Well, I—I told Billy it wouldn't be convenient, and I tried my best to stave her off, but— The fact is, young man, you should have told me about

this—wedding business last night. Why, I'll have to buy silk dresses, and—and all sorts of parasols, and——”

“Then she's ordered them?”

“The touring cars? I'm really afraid she has.”

The two men looked at each other in silence for the space of a minute. Then Jimmy got slowly to his feet.

“She can't get them delivered under a month.”

“And the making up of the parasols and that sort of thing'll take time.”

“She might change her mind about the tour,” mused Jimmy.

“That's right!” cried Mr. Carr encouragingly. “You can always depend upon Billy for changing her mind.”

Mr. Carr gripped Jimmy lovingly by the hand, with almost as much emotion as if he was about to embark in a dirigible balloon for a transatlantic trip.

“Good luck to you, my boy!” he said, with deep feeling. “You'd best give her her head all you can. She goes better that way.”

Wilhelmina told Jimmy all about her shopping expedition that evening. In fact, she was charmingly gay and confidential.

“It's going to be more fun!” she said. “After you'd gone last night I changed my mind about having a big wedding. So the first thing this morning I went to Uncle Baldy's office, and asked him to lend me a thousand dollars. He was awfully sweet about it, and only asked did I want to buy a balloon; but I didn't tell him.”

“Did you succeed in getting your cars?” inquired Jimmy.

Wilhelmina pouted.

“Do you know,” she said, “I had to order them, and they won't promise to get them for me for six weeks. I was so provoked.”

“Hard luck!” sympathized Jimmy.

“Yes, wasn't it? We could have been married this evening, and started on our tour to-morrow just as well as not.”

He was sitting quite close to her on the sofa, and, as yet, she hadn't appeared to notice the fact.

“The girls liked my ring,” she observed carelessly. “I went to an after-

noon tea at Alicia's, and they were all there.”

“Did you—er——”

“Yes, I told them, and they've all promised to be bridesmaids.”

Wilhelmina paused to laugh softly.

“They think it's so funny you aren't going.”

“Oh, you told them——”

“I said that you were wild to go—and you are, aren't you?—but that you had decided you couldn't get away from business just at present.”

“H'm!” murmured Jimmy, possessing himself of her hand.

“No!” frowned Wilhelmina, drawing it away.

“But you agreed to pretend,” he reproached her.

“Only when people are looking,” she reminded him. “There's no use of it when we're alone.”

“All right,” said Jimmy. “I'll remember that.”

“Don't be tiresome,” she admonished him briskly. “When I got home I told Aunt Nervy.”

“How does aunty take to the idea?”

“Take to it! She said at first we couldn't possibly be married under six months. She is afraid I don't know my own mind. And she seemed so surprised to think it was you. She thought I liked George best; and I don't know but what I do, when it comes to liking. He plays tennis better than you do. I nearly told her so, but I remembered just in time; so I said I simply adored you, and had from a child.”

“Good for you!” cried Jimmy. “That's the stuff!”

Then he kissed her.

“Just to get my hand in,” he explained.

She punished him properly by removing her adorable person to a distant chair. But she didn't appear particularly offended.

“If you can listen without interrupting,” she warned him, “I'll tell you what I said to Aunt Nervy about the wedding.”

“I'm all attention,” he assured her.

“She said she liked you almost as well as George on some accounts; only

George was her ideal as far as principles were concerned. I told her that you had plenty of principles—whatever those are; and that I couldn't endure you if you had one more. After that she kissed me some more, and told me she was going to deed a house on Chestnut Avenue to me, and Uncle Baldy is going to furnish it."

"For us to live in?" inquired Jimmy. "Look here, Willy, why couldn't we go to—"

"We'll have to pretend we're going to, anyway, and take an interest in it, I suppose," she admitted grudgingly.

"Perhaps when you get back we might—"

"My wedding dress is going to be white satin, with a long train," she interrupted, "and the girls are going to be in rainbow tints, two pink, two pale blue, two yellow, and two lavender; and Alicia will wear white, and walk just ahead of me. It's going to be lovely!"

He turned a little pale under his tan, but she didn't appear to notice it.

"There's one thing we haven't thought of, Willy," he said slowly.

"There are loads of things I haven't thought of, I'm sure," she agreed. "Invitations, for one thing, and presents. What in the world shall we do with them? If I hadn't asked the girls I believe I'd—"

"It won't do to change your mind about the wedding again," he told her, with a firmness he immediately repented in view of the puzzled frown with which she regarded him.

"Why, Jimmy," she said, "it would do perfectly well, but I shall go on just as I've planned on account of the girls. They would be awfully disappointed not to be bridesmaids."

"And afterward," he urged recklessly, "er—they'll all be standing around with rice and things, and expect us to go away together."

"Oh, I thought of that," she said calmly. "We'll all go."

"You mean—"

"They've promised to have my cars by then, and we'll start right after the wedding. The girls are crazy about the idea. It will be so original."

"What about me?"

"Oh, we'll squeeze you in somewhere."

"Willy!" he exclaimed rapturously.

"We can drop you at your house," she explained kindly, "just as well as not. It will be right on our way."

And she looked at him with a maddening smile.

He managed somehow to preserve his tottering equilibrium, and the next day Forsythe, the dealer, for a consideration, promised to hold back the arrival of the cars. It would not be a difficult matter, he said.

Very few events of the many which crowded the days immediately following stood out clearly in Mr. Bigelow's consciousness. Like a superior self-regulating automaton he ate his meals, delivered an entirely unintelligible oration in the elegant Latin tongue, received his degree, procured his marriage license, ordered ten bouquets of mammoth size, and unconsidered cost, purchased ten gold scarfpins, a pearl-and-diamond pendant, also a wedding ring.

During the week Wilhelmina had been growing more and more peevish. With the earnest and combined co-operation of milliners, dressmakers, seamstresses, florists, jewelers, shoemakers, hairdressers, caterers, decorators, and furnishers, the approaching wedding had assumed the terrifying proportions of a Juggernaut, manned by Aunt Minerva and an army of aunts and female cousins who had foregathered for the festive occasion.

"Oh, why did we ever think of anything so dreadful?" demanded the bride, who had descended, wan and disheveled, from the upper regions, where she was kept in durance vile a greater part of the day, to confront Jimmy, pale and wild, in the privacy of the parlor.

They could hear Aunt Minerva patrolling the hall outside for the benevolent purpose of herding the cousins into the library.

"She thinks we want to be alone," giggled Wilhelmina weakly. The giggle marking her demoralized and exhausted condition.

"Well, we do," declared Jimmy. "It's something awful, isn't it?"

"It's frightful!" she agreed. "And—and I've said I won't, and I shan't, and they don't even listen. They go right on hooking and unhooking, pinning and measuring, and snipping and basting. And Aunt Nervy says, in that dreadful soft, pussyish way of hers: 'Never mind, deary!' Then she turns to the others, and whispers: 'She's very nervous, poor child!' And they whisper back: 'No wonder, the dear girl!' as if I was deaf, and dumb, and idiotic. It's every bit your fault, Jimmy Bigelow!"

"My fault?" he echoed, dazed by the unjust accusation.

"If it hadn't been for what you said at Miss Blatchford's reception I should never have thought of such a thing as being married."

"But you——"

"I should have been gone by this time on the—the educational tour; and I wish I was."

"You sent for me and proposed it," he said firmly.

"Anyway, you began it. You know you did," she retaliated.

He heaved a deep sigh.

"You never know what you're getting into," he reflected sadly, "when you begin on a thing of this sort. I had no idea——"

"Nor I," she mourned. "And what do you think? To-day they sent word that my cars wouldn't be here for two weeks more. I simply raged, till aunty took the telephone away from me. I suppose she told the man I was nervous. But I can't think what to do."

"I'll tell you," suggested the Machiavellian Jimmy. "I'll take you away in my car, right after the wedding."

"Where?"

"Anywhere you like. We'll shake the whole outfit, and have a regular lark."

She sighed.

"It would be a relief," she conceded. "Alicia has been dreadfully tiresome lately. She talks about nothing but Dick, and how they're to stand during the ceremony, and how handsome Dick is in evening clothes, and how she is quite sure he is half an inch taller than

you are; and would it look well if Dick was to step back a little and stand by her just after we come in? One would suppose it was their wedding."

He was a trifle light-headed by reason of his manifold fears and anxieties, so he unthinkingly chose the ensuing moment for an enthusiastic description of his new touring car, in which he proposed to bear her from Alicia and other annoying persons.

Her eyes gradually brightened as he went on, her lips parted, and she gazed at him with an enchanting appearance of adorable sweetness, which bore the unsuspecting Jimmy aloft as on twin pinions of delight.

"I've been wondering," she murmured sweetly, "why it wouldn't be just as well to go right to our house. We could, you know. It's all ready, even to dear old Zebby in the kitchen. Aunt Nervy said I might have Zebby, because it's really her fault that I don't know how to cook anything but caramels."

"Would you—oh, Willy!"

"I think it might be the best way, don't you? Seeing my cars haven't come."

"You're dead tired, for one thing, with all this fuss," he commented, with a sober common sense which would have done credit to his grandfather. "And really there isn't much fun in hurtling about the country in a motor car when one wants to be quiet."

Wilhelmina's eyes shone diamond bright beneath the half-closed curtain of her lids.

"I shan't mind being quiet," she said.

He went away in a state of carefully concealed triumph, after kissing her good night before the cousins, as per agreement.

The Bigelow Warford nuptials were exactly like every other affair of the sort.

And, to quote from the leading newspapers:

The happy young couple drove away from the palatial residence of Mr. Baldwin Carr amid showers of rice and satin slippers, and a chorus of good wishes from the brilliant throng which had assembled, *et cetera, et cetera.*

The carriage door slammed; the hoofs of the horses clattered on the wet pavements—it had rained furiously earlier in the evening—and Jimmy turned to Wilhelmina, sitting demurely at his side in a wonderfully fetching going-away gown.

"Darling!" he murmured.

She had been angelically sweet, and patient, and unnaturally considerate of everybody all day. So much so, in fact, that Uncle Baldy Carr had been secretly alarmed. Such exhibitions of youthful piety on the part of Wilhelmina had hitherto marked shocking ebullitions of naughtiness. But he tactfully refrained from mentioning the fact to Jimmy, with the fatuous hope that the small gold ring on Wilhelmina's finger, and the solemn words of the book, would completely metamorphose the mischievous maid into the demure matron. It sometimes happens that way, but on this occasion—

"Jimmy," interrupted Wilhelmina, "here is the house."

It was just around the corner, and it was brilliantly illuminated in honor of its new mistress.

He helped her to alight. They walked together up to the porticoed entrance.

"Oh, my fan!" she exclaimed. "I must have left it in the carriage!"

Of course, he went back to look for it, and found it under the cushions after an exhaustive search, in which he was kindly assisted by the coachman. Then the carriage rolled away, and Jimmy ran up the steps two at a time.



Some one—a man—was sitting motionless on one of the benches.

All was dark within. He gripped the handle of the door. It resisted firmly, as a well-regulated doorknob should.

There was the sound of a carefully suppressed giggle from above, and he looked up to see Alicia Gillette's charming head protruding from a half-opened window.

"Willy says for you to go away," announced this young person.

"Tell Willy I must speak to her at once," ordered Jimmy sternly.

Miss Gillette disappeared. A light rain had begun to fall, and Mr. Bigelow, standing under the shelter of the portico, had ample time in which to ponder what he was going to say.

A slight sound apprised him of the return of some one to the window above. But it was Alicia Gillette's voice which floated down to him:

"Willy won't come."

"But why—what?" stuttered the unhappy bridegroom.

"If you must know," said Miss Gillette sweetly, "I can tell you that Wilhelmina found out only yesterday about your bribing Forsythe to hold back her cars. She's sure now that you never loved her."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Jimmy profanely. "I—"

The sound of the closing window marked the conclusion of the interview.

CHAPTER V.

After the crisp down-shutting of the window which marked the definite withdrawal of Miss Gillette, Mr. Bigelow yielded to the indignant impulse of the moment, thereby scoring a blunder, as will become apparent later on. The rain was coming down with the soft roar and patter peculiar to summer storms as he hurriedly retreated, scourged by the humiliating conviction that Wilhelmina was watching his departure from the upper-story window, and exulting in the undoubted success of her coup.

But this, if he had only known it, was far from being the fact. At the moment the beautiful Mrs. James Bigelow was crying her pretty eyes out in the arms of her maid of honor.

"I wish I hadn't d-done it!" she sobbed. "It was your horrid p-plan, Alicia!"

"Yes, but, dearest," expostulated Miss Gillette, "you know you were so perfectly furious when George told you about the touring cars. Jimmy had bribed Forsythe to hold back, on purpose to thwart your dearest hopes and ambitions. And you begged me to suggest something. And I thought of this. I'm sure he felt as badly as any one could wish!"

"But it—it's raining, and the carriage has g-gone, and he hasn't any umb-brella!" wept Wilhelmina.

Whereat Miss Gillette was at some pains to explain to the bride how really providential the rain was, since a thorough wetting would add materially to the sum of a complete and adequate requital. She devoutly hoped he wouldn't meet a cabman.

The lack of an umbrella was of very little moment to the fugitive as he waded recklessly through puddles which splashed his immaculate trousers to the knees, and oozed coldly through the meshes of his silk socks.

If he could but have foreseen the altogether probable effect of aiding and abetting Wilhelmina's speedy departure with the nine bridesmaids, Barstow, Perkins, and the Gillettes' chauffeur. And even supposing she had not changed her mind in favor of a conventional bridal tour, he might easily have pursued the party in his own reliable and high-powered roadster. Sooner or later they would have come severally or collectively to grief. And then he would have arrived unexpectedly, resourceful, genial, heroic, to warn, to comfort or command, as the occasion might require.

If, on the other hand, the Gillette chauffeur had proved equal to circumventing the all-round idiocy of Perkins, and the well-known recklessness of Barstow, he might still have kidnaped Wilhelmina in the disguise of a brigand. Such a bold and picturesque proceeding would, he felt confident, have pleased the fancy and captivated the imagination of Wilhelmina. The wretched bridegroom splashed through a flooded gutter as he contrasted these brilliant alternatives with his stupid performance.

The interested way in which a solitary policeman gazed after him brought Mr. Bigelow to a tardy realization of his present situation. Should he go home to face the shocked inquiries of his mother and sisters, and the sternly disapproving comments of his father? The Bigelow family as a unit had hardly approved of his hasty marriage to Wilhelmina. Both were far too young and inexperienced, his mother protested mildly. Miss Warford was too flighty and independent—as well as entirely too pretty—was the opinion of the Misses Bigelow, young ladies of severe scholastic attainments and high standards of conduct. James Bigelow senior had expressed himself even more caustically with regard to the matter; but since his views do not concern the further development of this history, they will not again be referred to. Uncle Baldy Carr would shelter him, if not gladly, then resignedly. But what explanation of his dripping and

homeless condition could be gracefully tendered to Aunt Minerva and the Warrford-Carr relations who would be stopping over till the morrow? He resolved at last to seek the hospitality of some inconspicuous hotel, only to discover that he had left his money in the pocket of his morning clothes, which, with other properties, had been confidingly dispatched to the residence of the bride.

At this final buffet of a maliciously amused Fate, Jimmy lost his temper completely.

"She's my wife," he reminded himself, with some sternness, "and I'll not endure it!"

Just what course he intended to pursue, in view of the very recent fact, it is impossible to forecast. But the thought of Wilhelmmina in her new rôle appeared to suggest an immediate return to the scene of his abasement. He had turned squarely about, and was making for the inhospitable mansion on Chestnut Avenue when Fate again intervened, this time in the guise of an umbrella point presented squarely to the onslaughts of the wind and rain by an impetuous young gentleman in a top-coat.

"Hello!" exclaimed the surprised pedestrian. Then he stared hard at the remarkable figure before him. "For the love of Mike!" he cried. "What are you doing here, Jimmy?"

It was the erstwhile best man, Mr. Richard Barstow, who should at that particular hour have been engaged in whispering soft good nights in the ear of the maid of honor. When asked in his turn for an explanation, Mr. Barstow stated in an offhand way that there had been some mistake about the carriages, and that, anyway, he was fond of walking.

"I know where Alicia is," Jimmy told him, with some bitterness.

Then he acquainted Mr. Barstow with the events of the past hour, which had made of him a homeless, penniless vagabond.

"I'm going back," he finished, "and—er—I'll get in somehow."

"You have the general appearance of a gentleman crook," objected Barstow.

"They'd probably have you arrested for burglary. No, my poor, misguided boy, this crisis demands dry flannels and a pipe. Come along with me. In the morning we'll devise some way to get even with the girls."

"To get even with the girls" was Dick Barstow's easy, bachelor way of putting it. But to Jimmy Bigelow, a married man of at least three hours' standing, the situation appeared far otherwise. Those two short words—"my wife"—had taken a mighty hold upon his imagination. This was not merely a freakish prank of Willy Warrford's, to be endured as best one might, but a serious infraction of *les convenances* on the part of the beautiful Mrs. James Bigelow. He spoke forcibly and at some length regarding his desire to return to his own proper residence, and of a conversation in which he wished to engage with Mrs. Bigelow concerning the epochal events of the evening. He also intimated his glad willingness to personally encounter any number of policemen who might attempt to frustrate his wishes. And all the while the rain dripped from his sodden hat brim to his dejected lapels, in which a white gauderia, reminiscent of the late bridal festivities, still lingered.

Dick Barstow became positively alarmed by his ravings.

"For Heaven's sake, man," he exhorted him, "pull yourself together, and take a sensible view of the matter. From what you tell me I don't see that you have any kick coming."

Somewhat later, clad in comfortable flannels, and solaced with uncounted pipes of Dick's excellent tobacco, the bridegroom was forced to admit that he had no sound basis for complaint.

"She told me in the beginning she was only marrying me so that she could buy three touring cars and go abroad with the girls," he said gloomily. "But I had a sort of hazy notion she didn't mean it, and that I might be able to—persuade her to change her mind."

Dick shook his head.

"You ought to have known better," he said, with a tinge of insufferable conceit, which Jimmy was too downcast to

resent. "You can't persuade a woman into changing her mind. She'll either do it when the whim seizes her, or she won't, and that's the end of it."

"She was awfully sweet and adorable all day," groaned Jimmy, sending forth immense clouds of smoke in his anguish. "She even let me kiss her when the cousins weren't around. And tonight, after she promised to love, honor, and obey—she said beforehand she didn't in the least mind having 'obey' left in the service—I felt sure she meant it."

"Pooh!" quoth the sapient Dick. "You can't count on anything like that nowadays. There isn't a woman alive who'll honor and obey any man going. All any reasonable fellow can expect in the long run is to be tolerated."

"If she'd even tolerated me I should have been thankful," sighed Jimmy dejectedly. "But only yesterday she told me if she'd thought of it in time she might as well have married that ass Perkins!"

"That was merely to get a rise out of you," was Dick's opinion. "It was our dear little Georgy-porgy who pumped the facts out of Forsythe. Why on earth you were such a jack as to interfere would take a greater genius than your humble servant to discover."

Jimmy wished he might see Perkins for a brief space of time. Half a minute would do for the purpose he had in mind.

"Oh, no, you don't," Mr. Barstow pointed out calmly and kindly. "If you should attempt to take it out of George, don't you see he'd let everybody in ten counties know? What you've got to do is to fix it up with Wilhelmina before anybody finds out what's happened."

"But if she won't even speak to me why——"

Dick Barstow burst into untimely laughter.

"Forgive me, my dear fellow," he begged, mopping the tears from his eyes, "but it all came over me—the way you looked when I met you, and all. D'y'e know, it's really too awfully funny, when you come to think of it."

"What's funny about it, you idiot?"

thundered Jimmy. "Suppose you were in my fix now, and Alicia——"

Dick waved his pipe pacifically.

"Calm yourself—calm yourself!" he advised. "It won't help matters any if you howl the roof off. If it'll do you any good, I'll admit that I'm in something of the same fix. Alicia informed me to-night of her intention never to speak to me again."

He shook his head sadly.

"There's nothing worse than a wedding for rousing up the latent deviltry in a girl. Seeing the fetters forged on another woman, and the triumphant expression of the—er—forger may have something to do with it."

"Look here," said Jimmy seriously, "if you're going on with this would-be pleasantry I'm going to leave you. I don't mind sleeping on a doormat in the rain, but I'll be hanged if I'll put up with——"

"Of course, they'll expect us to show up with something spectacular," interrupted Mr. Barstow, placidly ignoring the protest. "The present intrenched position denotes a lively anticipation of a siege."

"All right. I'm strong for it!"

Dick shook the ashes out of his pipe, his eyes fixed in frowning retrospect.

"You never want to rise to a bait like that," he pronounced oracularly. "Your best course is to keep carefully away till they've had time to think things over a bit."

"Then you don't think——"

Dick waved his hand in a large gesture of comprehension.

"Suppose we didn't go near them for a week or more, what fun would they get out of it? And what would they do? Don't you see, they're looking out for something worth while. I know girls, I tell you. I ought to. I've got five sisters."

"I've got sisters enough," said Jimmy gloomily. "But they're not like Willy."

As a result of this midnight conference Mr. Barstow, fully armed with plenary powers, marched boldly to the house of the bride; carefully timing his arrival at an hour of the morning when

he judged the cloistered damsels would be looking for something to happen.

The door opened in response to his ring after what seemed a very long time, and Mr. Barstow perceived, with a grin, that the chain lock had been carefully adjusted. Then a broad, red face, surmounted by an infinitesimal cap, appeared within. It was that of Miss Zebina Stiles, paragon of cooks and general housemaids.

"Good morning, Zebina," said Dick, with the ingratiating smile which had won him favor in the eyes of all the women who had come in his way.

"Good morning, sur," replied Zebina grimly.

Her mouth was drawn close over her somewhat protuberant teeth, and even her cap appeared to have been adjusted at an angle which suggested a militant and uncompromising state of mind.

"What would you be wantin' this mornin'?" she inquired pertinently.

"I want to see you, Zebina," smiled Dick. "Er—I have something that belongs to you, I believe."

And he deftly transferred an insignificant roll of greenish paper from his waistcoat pocket to that of Zebina's spotless apron.

"That'll do, sur," quoth the lady, with overpowering dignity. "They ain't nobody to home, in case you wanted to know."

"Honest, Zebby? Come, no fooling now. I want to see Mrs. Bigelow or Miss Gillette."

Miss Stiles stared opaquely through the narrow opening.

"Miss Gillette don't live here," she said, at last. "I guess you're mistaken in the house. An' Missus Bigelow ain't receivin' at this hour o' the mornin'."

Mr. Barstow thought a minute.

"Is Mr. Bigelow at home?" he inquired hypocritically. "It's really very important for me to—er—see him."

Miss Stiles' gaze became yet more darkly reserved.

"I sh'd think you'd know better th'n t' be askin' fer him," she replied, in a hollow tone. "An' her only married las' night, though for why th' can't nobody think."

"You mean he's not here?"

"I've muffins in the oven fer the young ladies' breakfasts, sur, an' I'll thank you kindly fer goin' away peaceable, while I look to them."

"Oh, then Miss Gillette is here? Won't you ask her to come down?"

"I've had my orders, sur."

"Yes; but you haven't everything that's coming your way." And he transferred another of the greenish paper rolls to the apron pocket nearest the door.

"Come, Zebby," he murmured confidentially, "between us we know a few things; but it's just possible you might be of great service to your young mistress. You don't want to see her unhappy, do you?"

Miss Stiles sniffed scornfully.

"The's very few gent'men as can't be missed to their advantage," she said loftily. "I guess Miss Willy'll do very well without any of 'em, same's I have, though not for want of chances."

"But you don't really think it's right to shut a man out of his own house, do you?" demanded Mr. Barstow sternly. "Look at me, Zebina!"

Miss Stiles complied with one eye, while the other coyly refused to meet Mr. Barstow's forceful gaze.

"It ain't fer me to say what I thinks," she replied, "but Miss Willy said most particular that if any gent'man asked fer her I was to say she would like to be excused."

"Then she was expecting some one?" inferred Dick.

"How should I know what Miss Willy was expectin'? Most anybody'd suppose he'd 'a' been here full 's early's the milkman, considerin' all things. But I ain't seen nothin' of 'im, as yet."

"I came instead," said Mr. Barstow, eying the spinster with smiling hardness. "Come, why not be civil, Zebby? Let down that confounded chain, and let me in. I've an important message for Mrs. Bigelow."

"My! It do seem too queer to hear you a-callin' Miss Willy that, an' her no better than a grass widow a'ready! But there's no use, sur. You couldn't

CHAPTER VI.



Miss Stiles dropped the flatiron and shrieked.

no more get either of 'em down 'an an angel out o' heaven. They're that set an' d'termined; an' serves him right, in my way o' thinkin'."

Dick reflected a minute, with a half smile on his handsome, good-humored face.

"All right," he said at last. "You may tell the young ladies, with my compliments, that I hope they'll enjoy the rest and quiet of this sylvan spot. Mr. Bigelow and myself are thinking of taking a little trip, and we may not be back for some weeks."

Zebina looked distinctly crestfallen. It was evident that she had been led to expect a swift succession of exciting and remunerative interviews.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed sharply. "Takin' a little trip—huh? An' her married to him only las' night! An' mebbe it's you as put him up to it. I've my opinion of the both of ye, t' be talkin' o' trips this day."

Dick marched away, as briskly as he had come, very conscious indeed of Miss Gillette's bright eyes, which appeared to be burning a hole right through the back of his coat.

The residence which had been presented to Miss Wilhelmina Warford on the occasion of her marriage was a somewhat old-fashioned red brick structure, of the bay-windowed, verandaed style of architecture. It was set in an ample plot of ground, diversified with trees, shrubs, and flower pots, and separated from neighboring grounds by tall hedges of clipped privet; in the rear of the back stoop was a latticed clothes yard, a grape arbor, and a shallow terrace which conducted one by way of a flight of brick-and-mortar steps to a tiny vegetable garden, where salads and other green succulent things grew in ordered rows.

On the day after the wedding, Miss Minerva Carr surprised her brother in the act of leaving his house in a furtive manner.

"Where are you going, Baldwin?" she inquired.

"Where am I going?" echoed Mr. Carr touchily. "Why, where do you suppose? Can't I go out for a walk, Nervy, without your——"

"Well, don't go over to Chestnut Street, whatever you do!"

"Why not?"

"Baldwin, I am surprised at you! They were only married yesterday. Naturally they will wish to be left to themselves."

"But I want to look after those tomato plants, Nervy. They'll probably be beaten right down with the rain."

"No, Baldwin, that is only an excuse. What you really want is to see Mina. You'd go right in, and probably spend the evening without a thought."

Mr. Carr fixed his hat solidly on his forehead, a stubborn look, with which Miss Minerva was perfectly familiar, coming over his face.

"Well, I promise you, Nervy, I won't even speak to Willy if I see her. But I'll just drop around and tell Zebina

about the tomatoes. Zebby can be seen, can't she?"

"She ought not to be, Baldwin, for at least a week," Miss Minerva said firmly.

"Huh!" ejaculated Mr. Carr.

There had been a spark of impish mischief in Wilhelmina's eyes as she came downstairs the night before, which bothered Mr. Carr. He had seen that look before in those beautiful brown eyes, and it invariably presaged a surprise of some sort or other. In spite of Miss Minerva's warnings, he felt an inward conviction which appeared to guide his footsteps unerringly toward the prohibited house on Chestnut Street.

If he could but catch a reassuring glimpse of Wilhelmina, or exchange an "all's well!" with the bridegroom, he was confident that his night's rest would be more tranquil. And, after all, why should he be henpecked by Minerva? Nervy's notions of propriety dated back into the Victorian era, when women wore hoops to keep the men at arms' length, and their hair combed close over their pretty ears to prevent the faintest whisper of those "advanced ideas" which were now so alarmingly prevalent.

There was a gate leading in through the hedge at the side, and Uncle Baldy opened this cautiously, and closed it noiselessly behind him. He thought he saw Zebina Stiles' massive figure moving in the vicinity of the clothes yard. He advanced with some assurance, but was totally unprepared for the squawk of alarm with which his late domestic greeted his appearance.

"Lord, sur!" she exclaimed, clutching wildly at the bib of her apron. "How you scart me!"

"Nonsense, Zebby! What's the matter with you?" Mr. Carr rallied her. "How's Miss Willy?"

"As well's can be expected, sur," returned Zebina, "though what with worritin' over burglars, an' Miss Alicia —"

She emitted a little shriek, and shook a plaid dish towel in Mr. Carr's face. "Go away, sur, do! I'm that up-

set in me mind, I don't know what I do be sayin'!"

And Mr. Carr, quite stupefied with amazement and concern, beheld her broad back in full retreat.

By the time he had collected himself sufficiently for pursuit, the slam of the hastily shut back door, and the rattle of the bolt in its socket, apprised him of the fact that Miss Stiles was disinclined for further conversation.

"Afraid of burglars?" cogitated Mr. Carr. "Why on earth should Billy be afraid of burglars?"

He pottered about among the flowers for a matter of ten minutes or so, endeavoring to account for the unwonted timidity of the bride on the score of the wagon load of wedding presents which had been sent over to the new house that morning. There had been a dazzling array of cut glass, silver in all conceivable shapes, and other "truck," as Uncle Baldy irreverently termed the evidences of esteem with which the friends of the young couple had endowed them.

Then he went down into the garden and inspected the rain-beaten tomato plants, all the while casting furtive glances in the direction of the house. Everything about the place was trim and correct; undoubtedly that demure green roof sheltered a pair of blissful and entirely self-engrossed lovers, and Zebina's agitation might be attributed to the fact that she feared his untimely intrusion.

Still cogitating thus uneasily with himself, Mr. Carr came up the terrace steps; then, led by some mysterious attraction of which he was only partly aware, he turned aside to view the grape arbor, now gloomed with the green twilight of its broad, luxuriant foliage. Some one—a man—was sitting motionless on one of the benches. At sight of Mr. Carr he started to his feet, and turned a startled and somewhat abashed face upon the expansive smile and outstretched hand with which the older man greeted him.

"Why, hello, Jimmy, how are you?" exclaimed Uncle Baldy, with all the more empressement, as the singular ef-

fect of that lonely, secluded figure dawned upon him. "How goes it, old man?" Come out here to smoke your pipe in peace—eh? Billy henpecking you already?"

And he indulged in rather an artificial imitation of his usual infectious chuckle.

There was very little spontaneity in Mr. Bigelow's reply, for the reason that he could not, on the spur of the moment, think what to say. Nor could he satisfactorily explain his presence in the grape arbor, even to himself. He had unqualifiedly agreed with his friend Barstow in thinking that it would be a vastly clever idea to leave the cloistered ladies to themselves for a time.

"They'll get awfully tired of the rôle they've chosen, and of each other," predicted Mr. Barstow, "especially if we sit tight and give them a chance. Non-resistance, my boy, is the one thing a woman cannot understand."

This was undoubtedly philosophical and possibly very wise advice, but somehow Jimmy couldn't quite assimilate it. It was all well enough for Dick, he told himself, but that gay and care-free young bachelor could hardly be expected to understand the feelings of a married man. And when Barstow had excused himself from any further argument over the subject on the plea of an engagement, and had gone forth jauntily, arrayed for a dinner party in a distant part of the city, Jimmy seized the opportunity for a reconnaissance. He had chosen the gloomy recesses of the grape arbor as a spot eminently in keeping with his mournful cogitations.

"Fine weather to-day after last night's rain," pursued Mr. Carr, with great urbanity of manner. "I—er—just ran in by the garden gate to take a squint at the tomatoes. Had a chance to look the garden over yet? No? Why, come on! Say, things have just been bumping. But I see the lettuce wants hoeing, and—"

Mr. Carr stopped short. It would have been impossible for even the most sanguine of observers to further misinterpret the distraught appearance of the bridegroom.

"Er—what's the matter?" he demanded. "Anything up with Billy?"

Jimmy heaved a deep sigh.

"I wonder if I'd better tell you," he hesitated.

"Of course—of course—by all means!" vociferated Uncle Baldy, his forehead wrinkling with anxiety. "Sit down—sit down! Make a clean breast of it, my boy, whatever it is. Bless my soul! I felt it in my bones she was up to something."

He scowled, and fidgeted, and slapped his knees, and finally burst into uncontrollable merriment as Jimmy related the events of his honeymoon to date.

"Say, do you know, that was very clever of Billy!" he gasped, wiping his eyes. "The little skeesicks! My, my! Jimmy, the dance that wisp of a girl has led your Uncle Baldy! But I miss her. Blame it! I felt this morning as if I had nothing left to live for. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Do!" echoed Jimmy. "What can I do? I thought some of breaking into the house, and sending Alicia packing."

"Yes, yes, Alicia! Do you know, I've sometimes suspected Alicia of putting Billy up to a point or two. She's full of ideas, that little Miss Gillette, and—er—as sly as a kitten stealing cream. The two of 'em together would be a handful for any man. Now, let me think. H'm—yes, yes! I'll tell you, suppose I go and—and ring the bell, and inquire for Billy; and—er—then I'll ask for you, and—see what she says. How's that for an idea?"

"What could she say?" objected Jimmy gloomily. "Besides, that old dragon of a Zebina won't let you in."

"Guess you're right," admitted Mr. Carr, recalling the demeanor of his late domestic, which was now fully explained in the light of Jimmy's disclosures. "But—er—by the way," he added, "that reminds me; they're afraid of burglars."

"Serves 'em right," grumbled Mr. Bigelow.

"Why not give 'em something to be scared about—eh?" suggested Uncle Baldy.

Then he warmed to the idea, which

he conceived to be entirely original, though it was in all essential particulars as old as the pyramids, or as the egotism of the male animal, which is unquestionably older.

"All women are cowards," was the corner stone of Uncle Baldy's brilliant hypothesis. "And once they're scared they always turn to the nearest man for help," was the entirely unsupported and out-of-date conclusion derived therefrom.

"Does Billy know you're here?" he inquired, with an eagerness which Jimmy was too downhearted to share.

"No. I've kept dark all day," he sighed.

"Good!" cried Uncle Baldy. "Splendid! Now, suppose I personate the burglar, and you——"

"But I don't want her to be frightened," objected Jimmy. "She hates me enough now."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Uncle Baldy. "Billy doesn't hate you; not a bit of it, my dear fellow. Why, I heard her tell one of the cousins she'd been in love with you since she was five years old. Fact, I assure you!"

"Yes. But that was part of the game —don't you see? I'm simply not in it at all, except as a necessary evil to help her get her money."

"Pooh, pooh! You've got to go in to win, man! If you can't do it any other way, subdue her by capture. I'll wager anything you like that she's crazy to see you this minute."

"I'd give anything to know if that's so," muttered Jimmy skeptically.

CHAPTER VII.

For once, at least, Mr. Baldwin Carr was right about Wilhelmina. She had quite frankly expected some sort of a demonstration of anger or grief, or both, on the part of Jimmy. And when, after his ignominious dismissal by Alicia, he had gone meekly and quietly away, instead of pounding lustily on the door, or even breaking a window—as she could not help thinking he might easily have done—she had experienced a keen sense of disappointment, which

had manifested itself in the tears and unjust recriminations before referred to. And long after Miss Gillette, wearied by her arduous duties and responsibilities as maid of honor and conspirator in chief, had fallen into balmy slumber, the bride had lain wide-eyed, listening to the monotonous drip and gurgle of the rain, and the faint chirping of a disconsolate cricket in the drenched shrubbery. Once she thought she heard his cheerful whistle far down the street, and again the thumping of a wind-blown shutter simulated the footsteps for which all unconsciously she was straining her ears. It was inconceivable that he should take her at her word without a protest.

After what seemed like hours of these nugatory reflections, Wilhelmina stole out of bed and, attired in a fetching negligee of silk and lace, leaned far out over the window sill, inspired by the fancy that he might be below, keeping watch and guard over her supposed slumbers. She even ventured to whisper his name softly, appealingly, urgently. But only the lonesome cricket complained of his bereft condition, and the night appeared appallingly big and dark, and the rain beat coldly on the silk-and-lace confection.

If she had been in Jimmy's place, she told herself illogically, she would have refused to stir from the spot. If Jimmy preferred the dry snugness of some hotel to the wet grass beneath her windows, it was *prima-facie* evidence that he did not love her a single bit, and never had.

Of course, she didn't care whether he loved her or not. She didn't want him to love her. But he had said that he loved her over and over again, and it was enough to make any one cry to find out that men were so horribly deceitful. After she had reduced her handkerchief to a small, wet ball, and been forced to turn her tumbled pillow twice, she quite naturally became exceedingly indignant with men, considered generically, and specifically with Jimmy Bigelow.

If it had not been for Jimmy, she reminded herself for the twentieth time,

she might now have been improving her mind and her general outlook on life with the Misses Blatchford, in Paris, instead of lying wide awake, with a new ring on her finger—which she couldn't help feeling of in the darkness—and a meddlesome maid of honor sound asleep at her side.

It was exactly like Alicia to interfere. She was always setting people right, and telling them what they ought to do, in the most exasperating manner. Wilhelmina wasn't altogether clear in



By way of answer Jimmy shot out a pair of powerful arms, and gripped the fellow.

her mind as to what would have happened if Alicia hadn't meddled.

Then, quite unexpectedly, she fell soundly asleep. When she awoke it was broad daylight, and Alicia, fresh and rosy from her bath, was doing up her hair in front of the mirror.

"Oh, good morning, dear!" cooed Miss Gillette, catching sight of the wide, brown eyes, and it must be owned the pucker between them.

"What do you think? Dick has been here already!"

"Dick?" echoed the bride.

"Yes, Dick, and in the darlings rough straw hat with a blue band. To tell you the truth, dear, I knew he'd come, as soon as he found out I was here, and—"

"How should he know you were here?"

"I suppose Jimmy must have told him. He probably went around to see Dick the first thing last night. They're awfully intimate, you know."

She paused to survey herself in the hand mirror, turning her head from side to side, in order to study the effect of the soft waves of auburn hair about her ears.

"How do you like my hair done this way, Willy?" she asked earnestly. "It's awfully stylish, but I don't think it's half as becoming as a pompadour. My nose is—"

But Mrs. Bigelow had disappeared, impelled by one of the sudden flashes of resolution which rendered her companionship so piquant and full of small surprises. When she returned fully dressed, it was to find her friend peering laughingly out of the window.

"Two sparrows," she explained, "were having the most absurd squabble over a bit of straw. And, oh, I forgot to tell you, Dick asked for you. He said he had a message—or a note, or something—from Jimmy, perhaps. One would suppose he would take some notice of what has happened, if only for the look of it."

"Where is it?"

"Oh, Dick didn't leave anything. He just wanted to see me; but you know we told Zebina last night not to let any one in; so, of course, she didn't. But the best joke—what do you think?"

"How can I think when you talk so fast?"

"You poor darling, you're all tired out, and cross, and nervous, aren't you, dear? And no wonder! The way Jimmy Bigelow has acted is enough to make——"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, Alicia; and I'm not tired at all."

"As I was telling you"—Miss Gillette shrugged, and dimpled, and bit her lip—"Dick was simply furious! I leaned over the banister till I nearly broke my neck trying to get a good look at him. They're going away, you know, and I can't think how you're going to manage. Of course, I might go home, and I'm sure mother will insist when she finds out where I am. She supposes I'm stopping with Marian. But everybody will think it's awfully funny if you——"

"Who said they were going?" demanded Wilhelmina, rather wildly.

"Why, Dick said so. Didn't I tell you? Of course, I don't believe for a minute that Dick will go. Why should he? But it's different with Jimmy, don't you see? He can't be seen around here without you. His mother and the Bigelow girls would be perfectly scandalized, and so I think it's quite the best thing for him to do."

"Well, I don't," cried Wilhelmina. "If he dares to go, I'll—I'll——"

Angry tears filled her eyes, and choked her utterance.

Miss Gillette surveyed her friend calmly. There was even a glimmer of tolerant amusement in her eyes, as she said, very sweetly, indeed:

"Why, Willy, dear, it would be ever so much nicer for you to have Jimmy away. Your cars will be here next week—then you can do exactly as you've planned, without any one to interfere."

"I don't want to do exactly as I've planned," said Wilhelmina perversely. "There's nothing so stupid."

She stared defiantly at Alicia from under gathered brows.

"I didn't think you would, any of the time," warbled Miss Gillette. "You know, dearest, you are *so* changeable.

You won't mind my telling you, I'm sure, but that was *one* of the things Leticia Bigelow said about you. Letty told Florence Hewett in confidence, and Florence told Marian, and Marian told me—you know the Hewetts are same sort of relation to the Bigelows, and so, of course, Florence would *know*. She said she and Alice were *awfully afraid* you wouldn't make Jimmy happy, just on that account. Marian and I were *so* amused, for, of course, we knew you were planning to go off and leave Jimmy the minute you were married. Not that I blame you in the least. I'm sure I should feel exactly like doing the same thing if I had married into the Bigelow family."

Somewhat Wilhelmina's indignant eyes caught the glitter of her new ring, and she suppressed the words which sprang to her lips, the occasion marking a new and wide departure from her usual procedure.

"I think breakfast is ready, Alicia," she remarked, with an accession of stately reserve in her tone and manner which astonished Miss Gillette, while it afforded her secret amusement.

The dining room, with its shining mahogany, its delicate china and napery, and the dewy roses nestled among fresh green leaves in a cut-glass bowl, was the picture of cozy domesticity, and Zebina waited upon the two with gloomy propriety of manner. But after the meal was over she drew her young mistress into the kitchen. There, upon the floor, banked up against the wall, and heaping the kitchen tables and chairs, were the wedding presents, great and small.

"Patrick McCready brought 'em from the other house this mornin'," said Zebina, with a tragic gesture. "Whatever are you goin' t' do with 'em, Miss Willy?"

To Wilhelmina these concrete expressions of confidence and affection on the part of her friends suddenly appeared in the light of so many active accusations. There was the chest of silver contributed by Uncle Baldy, and the valuable carved armchair given by the Misses Bigelow, and obviously in-

tended for the male head of the house; there was the rich Persian rug from Jimmy's mother, and the envelope containing a check from his father, carefully secured to the tall clock, which was to have ticked off the hours of their wedded happiness. There were boxes and knobby bundles innumerable, containing glass and silver, ivory and bronze; there was the unavoidable rubber plant in the indispensable jardinière; and a yellow canary in a gilded cage, twittering his shrill disapproval of his surroundings.

"If he wuz here to keep 'em from bein' stole," syllabled Zebina, pointing a stern finger at the collection, "I w'u'dn't care. But never a wink o' sleep will I be gettin' with no man about the place, an' all that silverware an' joolry."

"What fun to put everything in place!" cried the light-hearted Alicia, totally unable to understand the downcast looks of the bride. "The rubber plant ought to stand in the bay window in the dining room, Willy, with the canary right over it. And I'll bring over a kitten the next time I come."

The unpacking and subsequent arrangement and rearrangement of some two hundred and fifty articles kept the bride and her satellites busily occupied during the greater part of the day.

"It's all too sweet," sighed Miss Gillette, "and the way we finally decided to have the vases on the mantel is perfectly fetching! Really, Willy, I should think you'd almost feel like staying in this house; only, of course, you couldn't very well live here all alone."

Wilhelmina was tired, and the strain of listening for a step that didn't come had worn sadly on her nerves. She struggled for an instant with her newfound dignity, then suddenly crumpled up into a forlorn little heap in the middle of her new possessions, and burst into tears.

"Why, Willy, dearest!" besought Miss Gillette. "What have I said? I won't leave you to-night, dear, and I'll try and stay over to-morrow."

"I wish you'd go away!" sobbed Wilhelmina. And she extricated her-

self with force and decision from the soft, round arms which essayed to clasp her.

"If I thought you really meant it, darling, I should go at once," murmured Alicia forgivingly. "But I just know how nervous and worn out you must be feeling. I didn't think I'd better tell you, but when Dick spoke of Jimmy's going away this morning, he said——"

"Do you suppose he's gone already?"

"I'm sure I hope he has, for your sake, dearest. You wouldn't want to see him now, after all that's happened, would you?"

"Y-yes, I would!"

Miss Gillette raised her delicate eyebrows in pained protest.

"Perhaps you don't realize it, Wilhelmina, but you are certainly acting in the most inconsistent manner," she pointed out. "Only yesterday morning you told me that if Jimmy Bigelow was the last man on earth, you——"

"That was because I despised George for telling," said Wilhelmina, sitting up with unexpected energy, and wiping her eyes. "I should think you might have known it. Anyway, I'm almost starved, I hate the sight of all that horrid silver, and I just hope a burglar——"

Miss Gillette shrieked faintly.

"I never thought of it!" she declared. "But of course all those spoons and things must be worth hundreds and hundreds of dollars. Besides, there are our engagement rings and your pendant. What could we do, if anybody should get in?"

Thereupon ensued a careful and comprehensive consideration of the subject, with the result that by bedtime there was some question as to what would happen to a burglar in case he got in.

At nine o'clock, as Miss Zebina Stiles was completing in the kitchen an ingenious and artful arrangement of tin pans, tubs of water, and other household furnishings, a very singular-looking person was reconnoitering the premises outside.

He made considerable noise of a stealthy sort as he thoughtfully wiped

his feet on the mat, and carefully applied his knuckles to the lower left-hand pane of the back-kitchen window. At the moment Miss Stiles was in the act of balancing a flatiron on top of a pyramid of bread tins—the idea being to intimidate a burglar into falling into the flypaper directly back of and abutting upon the uncorked ammonia bottle, which in its turn conducted one by easy stages to the coal hod, the washtub, and the fire irons, correlative related, and marking the ripe experience of years passed in nightly expectation of marauders—Miss Stiles dropped the flatiron and shrieked. Then other things happened in the orderly sequence indicated.

"Lawk! Is it you, sur?" exclaimed Zebina.

The face against the pane was unquestionably that of Mr. Baldwin Carr, and, after a moment of quite natural hesitation, Miss Stiles opened the window a hand's breadth.

Mr. Carr was wearing an old and ill-fitting coat, which Zebina remembered to have seen hanging in the attic of her former residence. He wore no collar, and his hat was torn in three places.

Zebina's thoughts were of the logical order, as her next question indicated.

"Does Miss Minervy know you're out in them clo'ees?" she asked sternly.

"No, Zebina, she does not," replied Mr. Carr. "How do I look?"

"I thought you was a burglar, sur, sure!"

"That's all right, then," chuckled the amateur cracksman, as it is now proper to call the guardian of Wilhelmina. "Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do. Are you paying attention?"

"Yes, sur," faltered Miss Stiles.

"Er—you've known Miss Willy most as long as I have, Zebby, and so I can say to you in confidence that this business of shutting Mr. Bigelow out of the house won't do. So—er—I'm undertaking to give the child a little scare. I want you to leave a window unlocked. This one'll do; only you must clear all that rubbish out of the way, so I won't make any noise, and then——"

"Do you mean as you're a-goin' to

turn into a reg'lar housebreaker? Lord save us, sur, at your time of life, an' you always that respectable, an' me a-workin' for you for a matter of twenty years!"

"Now, Zebina, listen to me," expostulated Mr. Carr, with some sternness. "Mr. Bigelow's going to be just around the house in the shrubbery, and when Miss Billy gets scared, of course, she'll open the window and call for help. And then Mr. Bigelow——"

Zebina suddenly threw her apron over her head, and burst into a hysterical giggle.

"Lord, sur!" she cried. "You've thought of everythin', haven't you?"

"Well—yes, we have. It'll be worth a matter of five dollars to you, my girl, to do as I tell you about the window; and another five if you'll tell Miss Willy that if anything happens in the night she's to open the window on the east side and call for help—on the east side, mind you."

"And I'm to tell her Mr. Bigelow'll be out there in the flower garden, sur?"

"No, no, Zebby! Don't mention Mr. Bigelow's name. You know Miss Willy—er—she mightn't quite get the idea. Just tell her, in a casual sort of way, that if burglars should enter the house, the proper thing to do is to open the window, and——"

"I'll tell her, sur," said Zebina, pocketing the bill which Mr. Carr handed in through the window, "and thank you kindly, sur. An' I'll say if she hears a noise she ain't to be scared, 'cause it'll be only you, sur, stealin' the spoons."

"No, no, no! Zebina, I want her to suppose I'm a regular burglar, and that——"

"An' sure you look it, sur. You're the spittin' image of my sister-in-law's second cousin, what got jail for seventeen months for housebreakin', an' served him right."

"Well, well, Zebina, I haven't time to argue the question. Clear up that truck, so I can get in quietly, and be sure and tell Miss Willy to call for help when she hears a noise. Don't say anything else. Now, mind!"

Miss Stiles drew the shades over the

kitchen window, and proceeded to rebuild her Scylla and Charybdis even more guilefully than before.

"To think of Mr. Carr in them clo'es," she meditated darkly. "You never can tell b' th' looks of 'em what any man'll do; an' him keepin' straight an' respectable till now. Well, I'll be ready fer 'im—he'll find!"

But she left the kitchen window unlocked, being a woman of her word. Then she went upstairs, her virtuous nose very high in the air, and her lips firmly compressed.

Alicia Gillette answered Zebina's ginnerly rap with a shriek and a giggle.

"I'm so nervous!" she apologized. "I don't know what I should do if I heard so much as a mouse squeak in the night."

"An' it's more than a mouse you'll be hearin'," was Miss Stiles' well-founded opinion. "When he tips over them pie tins, I'll bet th' pliceman'll hear 'em down t' th' corner."

Wilhelmina's pretty face had grown quite pale with apprehension.

"Any one would suppose you were really expecting a burglar to get in," she said crossly. "I'm sure nobody knows we're alone here."

"That's where you're wrong, Miss Willy," Zebina assured her triumphantly. "There's thim that knows; but I'll say no more. An' when you hear him a-crashin' over thim things in the kitchen 'twill be time fer you to open the windey an' call fer help. It'll be the east windey, mind!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Carr withdrew from the kitchen window, very well satisfied with his diplomatic interview with Zebina.

"We're all right, my boy," he said, rubbing his hands with the exuberant cheerfulness of middle age, which is frequently rather hard to bear when one is twenty-four, and the world is a blank. "I've fixed it up with Zebby. Ha, ha! That girl was the most surprised individual you ever saw. How do you like my get-up, anyhow? Anything to suggest?"

"Oh, you look sufficiently disreputable, if that's what's wanted," growled Jimmy morosely. "But I don't see what good it's going to do to scare Willy into supposing you're a burglar."

"You don't, eh? Well, now, my plan is this: She's shut herself up in there with the idea of getting along without a husband. How does it look to you?"

"She don't want me; that's evident," sighed Jimmy. "But—"

"Hold on," Mr. Carr continued argumentatively. "She supposes she can look out for herself. Now, we've got to bring it to her notice that she's merely a small, weak female, unable to—er—cope with rude circumstances in the shape of a burglar. Of course, we don't want to frighten her too much—nothing serious—ha, ha! But—er—just touch her up a bit, so that she'll naturally turn to her legal protector—yourself."

"After you get into the house, what do you propose to do?" inquired Jimmy sourly.

"Oh—make a little noise—er—knock about a bit, till they are waked up and thoroughly scared. That's when you get in your artistic work. You'll take up a strategic position in the shrubbery, and then, when Billy flies to the window and calls for help, you'll—"

"How do you know she'll do anything of the kind?"

"How do I know—hey? How do I know any old thing? Of course she'll do it; it's the only natural and logical thing for a woman to do. Burglars inside. Policemen outside. All women call for help out of windows."

"Then she won't; you can depend upon it."

"Ha, ha! You're getting on," cried Mr. Carr, slapping his knee. "Billy is contrary, as a rule. But this time she'll do as I say."

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Well, suppose she does as you say, and I dash out of the shrubbery. What next?"

"When she calls, it's your opportunity to answer—to—er—present yourself as ready to fight burglars, to subdue

the world, if necessary, for her sake. Let her know right off where you are. Say: 'I'm here, darling little tootsy-wootsy,' or words to that effect. She'll be glad enough to see you."

"And then?"

"Oh, the rest will follow like one, two, three. You tell her to hold on, and you'll be with her. Then put it to the back window, pile in; meet me somewhere—say the front hall, at the foot of the stairs—where we'll have a terrific combat; then I'll escape, leaving the plunder tied up in a pillowcase. Oh, I've got one, all right. Let me alone for remembering details." And

of Willy and Alicia," mumbled Jimmy, after an anxious pause. "Your proposition sounds all right, but there are two unknown quantities to be dealt with."

"Eliminate one of 'em," suggested Uncle Baldy, who had been a mathematical genius in his youth. "Get rid of Alicia."

"How?"

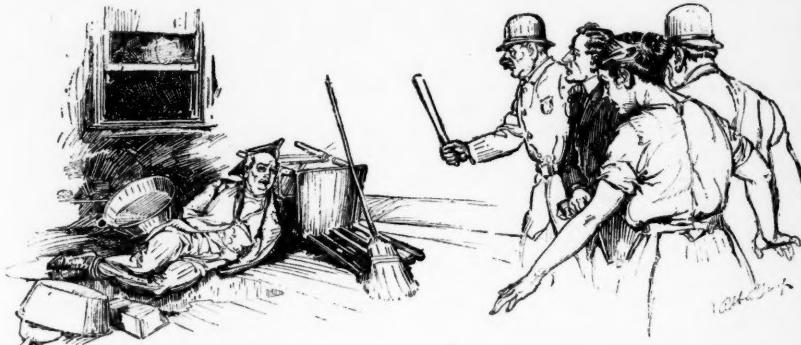
"Where's your friend Barstow?"

"At a dinner party."

"Do you know where?"

"Yes; at the Ripley-Shermans'."

"Get him here, and let him carry Alicia off. That's the ticket. She'll be just as tickled to see Dick as Billy is to



The kitchen presented a singular scene.

Mr. Carr proudly produced one of Miss Minerva's best embroidered and monogrammed pillow slips.

"Swiped it off the spare-room pillow," he whispered, doubling up with merriment.

"I suppose I'd better break your head while I'm about it," said Jimmy deliberately. "It would add to the realism."

"No, no, no!" protested Mr. Carr. "Nothing like that. We can make no end of noise with a couple of chairs. But I've got to get clean off. Then, if you aren't slow, you'll fix everything up with Billy. You ought to have her crying on your shoulder within ten minutes after I've made my escape. It'll be up to you, old man."

"The trouble is that you can't be sure

see you. Good idea—splendid! I tell you, those two girls in there'll prove no sort of match for your Uncle Baldy. Now, you slide away to the nearest telephone booth, and notify Barstow, and I'll just take a little snooze here on the bench, so's to be fresh and agile for the grand finale about one-thirty. And say, old man, when you come back bring a couple of sandwiches and a bottle of some cooling drink or other. It's kind of warm here."

Barstow, putting in a stupid evening at the Ripley-Shermans', responded to Jimmy's telephone message with scant enthusiasm.

"You're crazy with the heat, Jimmy," he told his friend, when Mr. Bigelow had cautiously imparted an outline of

the proposed campaign. "I should advise you to get old Carr home and into bed. He's probably in the first stages of senile dementia. Yes, yes, I hear you, and so will everybody else if you shout like that! I'll be there in time to take in the circus. As soon as I can—yes! But don't, for Heaven's sake, do anything rash!"

It was well on toward midnight when Mr. Bigelow once more entered the side gate, and sneaked sheepishly along the turfed border of the gravel walk, very much out of sorts with everybody, and most of all with himself. A young moon looked down at him coyly through a veil woven of small, milky clouds, and a lonely little wind moaned in the treetops. In the garden below tree toads and crickets were shrilling in a cadenced rhythm, which would have sounded very peaceful and soothing between dreams to a person snugly housed from the dark and the dew.

Never before in the course of his prosperous, well-ordered career had young James Bigelow found himself so hopelessly on the outside of things, and the sight of the house of his visions locked and barred against himself brought a stubborn lump to his throat, as he stumbled through the wet grass and the thorny bushes exhaling the odor of half-blown roses.

It seemed inhuman to disturb Mr. Carr, as he slumbered tranquilly under the cool, wind-stirred shelter of the grape vines, his coat rolled up beneath his head, his torn hat pulled low over his melodious nose; but Jimmy accomplished it with an energetic shake or two.

Mr. Carr protested incoherently, but with uncommon acrimony, and finally sat up, groaning. If Jimmy had not seen fit to make several kinds of a fool of himself, he declared, it would not now have been incumbent upon a perfectly respectable citizen to be out of his bed at such an unholy hour.

"You're a little too slow for Billy, and that's a fact," he sputtered thickly. "Didn't I warn you? By George! I knew she was up to something, and I told you——"

"Have a sandwich, sir?" suggested Jimmy inspirationally.

Mr. Carr pounced upon the proffered refreshment with avidity, and in the process of disposing of a prodigiously thick hunch of bread and cold chicken, washed down with copious drafts of ginger ale, he became cheerful, affable, even facetious once more.

"Don't believe I'll hang around here much longer," he remarked, as he swallowed the last crumb: "Strike while the iron's hot, is my motto. 'Do it now,' is the ticket. Remember what I told you! Keep cool. When Billy hollers out of the window, be ready with some spoony remark or other. I'll meet you inside later. Foot of the stairs. Don't forget. Now we're off."

The conspirators found no difficulty in approaching the house in a noiseless fashion; the thick, wet grass muffled every sound. The window slid obligingly open to the touch, as per previous arrangement.

"Give us a boost, old man," whispered Mr. Carr jubilantly. "That's it! Say, this *is* a lark! Now beat it for the tall grass!"

Mr. Bigelow's cautious retreat toward the designated spot in the shrubbery was marked by an appalling crash from the open kitchen window, as Mr. Carr stumbled full into the ambush prepared for his reception by Zebina.

"Guess I've waked 'em up, all right," chuckled Uncle Baldy to himself, as he endeavored to make his way across the dark kitchen, with the intent of penetrating to the inner recesses of the house.

Then, without warning, a single blinding flash blazed in his eyes; at the same instant he was borne swiftly, irresistibly to the floor, a handkerchief stuffed ruthlessly into his mouth, opened for a yell; his hands tied behind him, his ankles strapped neatly together—all this without a word from his unseen assailant.

CHAPTER IX.

Now, if ever, was the proper moment for a frightened young woman to open her window, and call for assistance upon

whomever might be lurking within earshot. But if Wilhelmina and her maid of honor heard the crash of falling tinware, fire irons, and crockery, and the muffled sounds of the subsequent struggle in the kitchen, they made no sign. The east window was shut, in spite of the warmth of the night, and it remained shut.

Jimmy stared at it with anguished eyes. In imagination, he beheld Wilhelmina, her charming brown eyes wide with fright, her heart—that airy, foolish, loving little heart which had hitherto eluded Jimmy's ardent efforts to capture it like a winged thistledown driven before a merry wind—that one heart of all the world, beating with terror; those soft, rose-tinted cheeks and lips pale with apprehension. Why didn't she do the only obvious and natural thing—the thing that all other women since the world began had hastened to do? Why didn't she open the window and call for help?

How entrancingly lovely she would look—all in some white, fluffy, frilly thing, which made Jimmy's honest heart beat to even think of, with the tumbled curls falling over her eyes, and her round arms bare to the elbows, leaning out of that upper-story window! The moon was shining full upon it, and moonlight was always fetchingly becoming to Wilhelmina.

Jimmy decided that he wouldn't wait for her to put her terror into words, for fear some vulgar policeman might hear and come to feast his eyes on her beauty. No, he would rush forth; he would call to her softly, lovingly, reassuringly. He would inform her that he had been watching over her slumbers, with no shelter for his dew-drenched head. He would throw such passion and longing into his words and voice that she could no more resist him than a comet can resist the sun.

Why *didn't* she open that window? How else could the rest of the program be carried out? Should he follow Mr. Carr into the house and engage in a mock combat at the foot of the stairs? Would it be possible to calm her fears from the inside as well as

from the outside? Would his presence be entirely convincing, and the rescue sufficiently romantic to counterbalance the affair of the three automobiles? Jimmy doubted it.

It occurred to him presently that he might toss a pebble against that obdurate window. Perhaps she would look out and see him. The possibility was a remote one, but how could he remain idly quiescent, while she was suffering within? There weren't many stones in the well-cultivated ground around the prickly barberries, not as many stones as sharp, thorn-set branches to dig into one's flesh, and extract stray wisps of one's hair, but Jimmy managed to collect a handful.

He was about to sally boldly forth with his ammunition, when a man, breathing hard, and bent almost double, dodged around the corner of the house, and pelted straight for the shrubbery. It wasn't Mr. Carr; Jimmy was sure of that, even in the dim, uncertain light. He carried a bag of something which clinked stealthily, as he crouched and pushed in among the bushes.

"Hello!" challenged Jimmy, in a low, surprised voice, which had an indignant ring of proprietorship. "What are you doing here?"

The other man stopped short, and retreated a step or two.

"That you, Bob?" he whispered. "Don't you know enough to seal up your gab? Say, we've got to beat it; I just knocked down a cop inside."

By way of answer Jimmy shot out a pair of powerful arms, and gripped the fellow, in the same general manner in which he would have tackled a man running with a football.

This brought the intruder crashing down among the bushes on top of the bag, with Jimmy on top of both.

The man underneath was young and powerful, and he presently succeeded in writhing out from Jimmy's hold.

"I'll get even with you for this, Bob, if I have to hang for it," he mumbled. "Thought you'd get away with all the swag, did you?"

And he dealt Jimmy a left-handed

blow which would have sent a weaker man sprawling. But Jimmy was ready for him. In the midst of the scrimmage which followed he heard the sound of a window going up, and a woman's voice calling shrilly for help. It wasn't Wilhelmina, he knew, and didn't care, as he went on tugging, straining, sweating in his efforts to subdue the unknown.

Then the not-to-be-expected occurred, as it occasionally does; there was the thud of a night watchman's club, a shrill whistle, and the sound of deliberate, official boot heels on the stone sidewalk. The fellow in Jimmy's grip gave a last effectual twist, and, leaving his coat in the other's grasp, crashed through a group of young lilacs, scrambled over the fence, and disappeared.

In another instant the official hand had descended heavily on Jimmy's shoulder, and the official voice sounded raucously in his ears.

And Jimmy, dazed by the swift events of the past five minutes, his hair tousled, and his clothes torn in his various struggles with the animate and inanimate forces with which he had come in contact, was hauled forth.

"You've got the wrong man," protested Jimmy. "I was fighting somebody or other, but he got away just as you came up."

"Chuck that!" exhorted the fat policeman, gripping his find with uncomfortable firmness. "No use resisting, my boy. We'll attend to your testimony later. What's that on the ground there?"

"The other fellow dropped it, I tell you. I don't know what it is. He must have been in the house."

"Silverware!" ejaculated the other policeman, after a cursory examination of the contents of the bag. "Guess we've nabbed the right chap. He's been operating on private houses in the neighborhood for some weeks, off and on. Better clap the bracelets on him, and run him right in."

At this juncture Zebina, from her window under the eaves, let forth a long, dismal catterwaul on the midnight air.

"Help! Burglars! Fire! Yeo-oo-w!
Help! Burglars! Fire! Yeo-oo-w!"

"Tell that female to shut up. We've got the burglar, all right. Guess I'd better phone for the patrol wagon to take care o' him. We'll have to examine the premises."

"You fellows'll be sorry for this," prophesied Jimmy sternly. "The man that took that stuff got over the fence just as you came up, I tell you. I was having a regular tussle with him. Better put in your time getting after him."

"Perhaps you'll tell us what you was doin' around here at this time o' night, young fellow?" answered the policeman, examining Jimmy more closely by the light of his lantern. "Say, Mikey, he's a gentleman crook, all right. Get onto his necktie. What was you up to—heh?"

"I was guarding my—prop—property," stammered Jimmy. "That woman up there will tell you that this is my—er—house."

"You mean to tell me you're the proprietor of these 'ere premises, an' that you——"

"I certainly am," declared Jimmy boldly. "I reside here with—my—my wife."

"Is that the lady hollerin' up there?"

"No, that's the servant. Hello! Zebina!"

"Why don't your lady show up?" inquired the officer sarcastically. "Mebbe she's asleep—heh?"

"I—er—don't know," muttered Jimmy. "She—my wife—is——"

"Yes, I guess likely. Well, don't go an' incriminate yourself, old chap; that's my advice to you."

"Ta-ake him away!" chanted the lady aloft. "He us t' be a r'spectable gent'man, but he's just took t' burglin'! An' me a-workin' for Miss Nervy fer nigh onto twenty years. An' then seein' him took up b' th' plice. Weo-oo-w!"

"She don't seem to give you a very good name," observed the fat policeman facetiously, as he secured the prisoner's hands.

"There's another man inside," volunteered Jimmy, actuated by a very pardonable anxiety for Mr. Carr's safety.

"Oh, there is, heh? All right; we'll gather in your pal after we've got you safely stowed."

It wasn't the patrol wagon, but a smart automobile which presently stopped before the door. Out of it climbed a tall young man in evening clothes, whom Jimmy recognized with sincere relief as Dick Barstow.

"Oh, hello, Jimmy," was Barstow's greeting. "So your amateur attempts at cracksmanship met with the proper recognition? Where's Mr. Carr?"

"See here, mister," put in the officer, "you look all right, but you'll have to explain your acquaintance with this chap here; he's a dangerous criminal; we've been on his trail for a matter of two weeks. How'd you happen to stop here, anyhow, at this time o' night?"

"To carry off the swag, like enough," growled the thin policeman. "I've seen crooks with automobiles b'fore. Better run in the whole outfit, an' be on the safe side."

Whereat Mr. Barstow became very civil, indeed, in his demeanor toward the minions of the law. He assured them, hastily and fervidly, that the presence of his friend, Mr. Bigelow, was entirely explainable on the—"

"Hold on! Not so fast," interrupted the officer. "Does your pal live here?"

"No; he doesn't. But—"

"Then he ain't got any wife inside?"

Jimmy groaned aloud in the anguish of his spirit.

"You go in, Dick, and see if—Willy— You'll find the kitchen window open."

"No, you don't, young man! Move another step, an' I'll clap the bracelets onto you. There's more in this than I thought."

"Take us in with you, you blathering idiot," pleaded Jimmy. "Get that woman down. She knows us both."

After what seemed a dreadful age to the anxious prisoners, the sound of a key turning gingerly in the lock was heard from within. Then, more slowly, several bolts were withdrawn.

"I ain't a-goin' to take down the chain fer nobody," said the voice of Zebina. "I've give my word to Miss Willy."

5

"Open up, open up, ma'am!" the fat policeman exhorted her, in a loud, authoritative voice. "Ain't we here? You'll come to no harm, unless you resist the law."

Zebina squawked a feeble protest; but in the end she admitted all four. As her eyes fell upon Jimmy, pale and disheveled, she started back.

"I thought it was Mr. Carr they'd caught, an' me a-warnin' of him not to steal Miss Willy's spoons, and him always that respectable. An' you was in it, too, leavin' poor Miss Willy t' be a grass—"

"Who's Mr. Carr?"

"The gent'man I ust t' work fer."

"Does Mr. Carr live here?" prodded the fat policeman. "An' who's this 'ere Willy you speak of?"

"Mr. Carr don't live here. No, sir. Him an' Miss Nervy give this house to her 'at was Miss Willy. Lawk! I couldn't say what her name would be after last night, an' him not bein' what we thought him, with han'cuffs an' all."

And she pointed an accusing finger at Jimmy.

"We'd better not fool 'round here any longer," growled the thin policeman, in the ear of his confrère. "I hear the wagon outside. Suppose we run in the whole outfit. The woman ought to be held for a witness."

"Run me in!" shrieked Zebina. "I ain't no burglar, if he is. I'm a person that never had nothin' t' do with th' police. I wouldn't marry one even, when I had the chanst, an' him a second cousin on me mother's side. 'No, George,' I says—"

"They'll put you in jail, Zebby, unless you tell the facts," said Dick Barstow cheerfully. "What's my name? Speak up, and tell these intelligent gentlemen."

"I've heard 'em call you Mis-ter Barstow," said Zebina conservatively. "But they can't nobody tell who's a liar nowadays, let alone a burglar."

"That's my name—Barstow; Richard Barstow. And this is my friend, James Bigelow, Junior, son of the Honorable James Bigelow."

"Come, you're stuffin' us! Why, this



At the same moment the lid of the clothes hamper flew open, and Alicia Gillette sprang up.

chap was caught just outside, with the swag in his possession."

"Search his pockets. There's a letter there. Now, do you see?"

"Take these things off my wrists," shouted Jimmy, "and let me see my wife! Haven't I told you there was a burglar? And you fools let him get clean away. For God's sake, examine the house!"

"Bring him along," conceded the fat policeman, mopping his forehead, "an' we'll take a look around. But you're under arrest, young man, don't care whose son you be!"

CHAPTER X.

The kitchen, whither Zebina presently conducted the party, presented a singular scene. In the middle of the floor, his feet in a puddle of water, his bald head reposing on a sheet of sticky fly paper, was the prostrate figure of Mr. Baldwin Carr.

"I didn't think it of you, my boy," was his initial remark, aimed thickly at his wretched accomplice. "Get me a drink, somebody!"

"Didn't think it of me?" cried Jimmy, in desperation. "I didn't touch you, sir. After you got in I went straight for the shrubbery; but everything went wrong. She didn't open the window. There was a man—two men—in the house—must have been here earlier in the night. Make these fools let me go. I must find out what's happened to Willy."

Mr. Carr stared at the two stalwart officers.

"Do you know who I am?" he demanded sharply.

The fly paper, still adhering to the crown of his head, and dribbling down over his brow, lent a strange and sinister aspect to his usually benign countenance.

"Well, I know a Mr. Carr around on Walnut Street," growled the fat policeman, rather sheepishly. "You look some like him, but—"

"I am Mr. Carr—Mr. Baldwin Carr. This young gentleman married my niece night before last. I believe I engaged you to look after things outside, and keep the carriages in line. Didn't I?"

"I—er—guess you did, sir; but—"

"All right. Take those handcuffs off Mr. Bigelow immediately."

"Where is your niece, sir, at the present moment?"

"Asleep in her bed, I hope. I'll soon find out. Why don't you—"

"Just a minute, sir. You was attacked by the burglar, you say, and then—"

"You saw the condition I was in."

"Yes; but how did you happen to be in your niece's kitchen, just as—"

"None of your business!" roared Mr. Carr. "Can't I be in my niece's kitchen, if I want to—eh? Is it any of your affairs?"

"He come in through the windy, sur,"

volunteered Zebina. "An' it was me as left it open by his orders, an' I'm sorry I listened to 'im; that I am."

"Did you ever hear of a joke?" demanded Mr. Carr fiercely. "This was a joke—a j-o-k-e! That's what it was. It was my idea. See?"

"You mean the burglary?"

"Yes. I wanted to give my niece a little scare."

"Oh, you did? Was this 'ere gentleman implicated?"

Uncle Baldy looked wildly about, and, catching Dick Barstow's fixed gaze, gasped, hesitated, and gurgled wordlessly.

"Er—what'd you want to know for?" he spluttered at last. "Come, get about your business. If there's been a burglar here, it's time you were after him."

The two officers exchanged a puzzled glance. Outside the impatient clang of the patrol wagon could be heard.

"We'll have to make a report, sir," said the fat policeman doggedly. "I guess one or all of you gentlemen'll have to come around t' headquarters."

Zebina squawked, and threw her apron over her head.

"T' think I sh'd live t' see this day!" she moaned. "An' him a brother t' Miss Nervy, as was always puseckly r'spectable an' kind t' me, a-payin' good wages reg'lar, an' no kick comin' about th' soap an' sich."

"I won't go!" roared Mr. Carr. "It's an outrage. Besides, I've got to see my niece. If there's been burglars in the house—"

"I knocked at th' door of their room, an' told 'em as how the burglars was caught b' th' plice," put in Zebina, "but they was quiet as the dead. Mebbe they was put out the way first. Oh, my! Oh, my!"

At this dreadful suggestion, Mr. Bigelow, still wearing the insignia of an unsuccessful burglar, made a bolt for the stair, with the two policemen after him, and Uncle Baldy bringing up the rear with Zebina, who still continued to bewail her damaged respectability.

"If you don't shut up," threatened Mr. Carr, "I'll throw you over the ban-

ister! A pretty mess you've made of it, with your fly paper and your tongue."

"I've done nothin' but what you told me, sur, an' see what's come of it," retorted Zebina. "I put the fly paper there to ketch a burglar with, an' nothin' less than strong lye an' a scrubbin' brush'll take it off; an' I'm sure I don't know what Miss Nervy'll say, as was always a perfec' lady in the past."

"Be quiet, woman," ordered the fat policeman. "If there has been a murderer committed, your testimony will be required."

"I knew it would happen," shrieked Zebina, "when Miss Willy cracked a lookin'-glass this mornin', a-puttin' away the weddin' presents!"

Jimmy Bigelow was beating loudly, insistently, on the closed door of his wife's room with his manacled hands.

"Willy!" he shouted. "Open the door—please, dear!"

"She's kilt—she's kilt!" shrieked Zebina hysterically.

The fat policeman and Dick Barstow applied their shoulders to the door. There was a dull splintering of bursting wood, the rasping sound of yielding screws, as the door slowly gave way to the steady pressure.

Meanwhile the thin policeman humanely removed the handcuffs from Jimmy's wrists.

"Mind, we ain't lettin' you go for good," he told him. "You're still under arrest, but you'll be allowed to go in and view the—remains."

There was nothing except the piled-up furniture behind the ruined door. But when Jimmy, almost delirious in his anxiety, flung open the wardrobe, a little figure clad in pale blue fell forward into his arms. At the same moment the lid of the clothes hamper flew open, and Alicia Gillette, in pink, sprang up with the effect of a particularly fetching jack-in-the-box, shrieking wildly for succor, which Mr. Barstow was prompt to afford.

"Tell those horrid men to go away!" was Mrs. James Bigelow's first coherent sentence.

"Do you mean the officers, dearest?" asked Jimmy, thoughtfully tightening

his clasp about her waist. "Go, my friends, by all means, and report the case. You still have an exciting pursuit of the burglar in prospect."

But the policemen were otherwise minded. They were smarting under the fear of impending ridicule, and the altogether tame and flavorless dénouement of an incident which had promised distinguished glory and renown in official circles. And it could not be denied that certain aspects of the case were still far from being satisfactorily cleared up.

"It looks to me as if there was a nigger in the woodpile somewhere," observed the fat policeman metaphorically, as he wiped the beaded perspiration from his forehead. "We'll have to trouble your lady to explain a few things before we leave. Is that there gent'man with the fly paper on his head any relation of yours, ma'am?"

Whereat Wilhelmina recognized her guardian with a horrified stare.

"Uncle Baldy!" she cried. "What have you been doing?"

"Something I shan't do again in a hurry," replied the amateur burglar. "What in thunder am I going to do, Billy?"

"You positively identify that person as your uncle, do you?" persisted the policeman, indicating the sufferer with his truncheon.

"I certainly do," replied Wilhelmina, with dignity.

"Well, how do you account for the fact that the gent'man entered your house by way of the back-kitchen window?"

"He was coming to call," explained the bride haughtily. "I was—expecting him."

"You were expecting your uncle, heh? And you thought he'd climb in through the——"

"I certainly did," said Wilhelmina, lying valiantly and unblushingly. "Uncle Baldy always comes to my house that way. He—he prefers to."

"And this 'ere chap as was caught with the goods in the bushes outside? What about him? Don't be afraid to speak the truth, ma'am. The' won't no intimidations be allowed."

Wilhelmina drew a long, sighing breath.

"He—he's my—husband!" she murmured, in the faintest ghost of a sweet little voice.

"Well, he said so. But what do you s'pose was his real notion in makin' way with the silverware, ma'am? Speak right up!"

"He had a perfect right to carry it away, because p-part of it was his," faltered Wilhelmina, growing very pink, "and when I wouldn't——"

But Jimmy interrupted with a loud and impatient remark, to the effect that the policeman was one of the fifty-seven varieties of an idiot, only he used two short, emphatic words to convey his meaning.

"I guess you've put your foot in, all right, Mikey," observed the thin policeman, *sotto voce*. "An' tain't the first time, neither."

Whereat the blue-coated ones withdrew creakingly to the lower floor, for the ostensible purpose of examining the premises.

The first streaks of a roseate dawn were beginning to steal through the closed blinds of the disordered room, and for a moment everybody gazed thoughtfully at everybody else. Then Mr. Barstow spoke.

"The patrol wagon," he announced solemnly, "has departed."

Alicia giggled hysterically.

"And the policemen?" he asked.

"They also appear to have tactfully withdrawn."

Miss Gillette was rearranging her disordered hair, with the comforting knowledge that it became her to be pale.

"If you don't mind, Willy, dear," she said sweetly. "I think Dick and I had better be going now."

She interrupted herself to deposit a rose-leaf kiss upon the cheek of the bride.

Wilhelmina drew a deep breath.

"We—might all go downstairs," she murmured uncertainly.

"Dick," said Mr. Bigelow, in a valedictory tone, "I'm heartily obliged to you for your assistance. Both my wife and I are under immense obligations."

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow," responded Mr. Barstow gracefully.

Wilhelmina watched them go. Then she turned to Jimmy, who was gazing at her worshipfully, while he endeavored to formulate a tactful explanation of the events of the past few hours. But Wilhelmina saved him the trouble.

"I understand everything," she said.

"You do?" exclaimed the surprised Jimmy, a swift wonderment as to the depth and scope of her mental processes almost overpowering him for the moment.

"You knew they were going to send the wedding presents over, because Aunt Nervy told us they were coming, and it occurred to you and Uncle Baldy simultaneously that the house ought to be guarded. But you were *the only one* who realized how utterly alone I was; so you were keeping watch and guard over me in the shrubbery."

Her general appearance was so irresistibly attractive at the moment that Jimmy found himself kissing her in the most natural way in the world. It seemed totally unnecessary to correct her very natural mistake.

"Any one in my place would do it," he murmured. He was referring in an apologetic way to the fact that he still held her in his arms. But she misinterpreted his remark.

"Most men," she said, with that calm assumption of a large knowledge of men as individuals which even very young matrons are apt to affect, "would have gone away, and left me to get along the best I could a-alone."

Tears rushed to her pretty eyes, and she looked up at him through them in a way which once more proved his undoing.

"But you—d-didn't! You saved me from that dreadful burglar, and from Zebina and Alicia."

"From—er—Zebina and Alicia?" he echoed.

"You couldn't know it, of course; but Zebina *expected* a burglar. She said so. And she tried to persuade me to leave my window open, so that he could climb in and get our engagement rings and my pendant. But I knew better!"

Her rosy triumph appeared to demand the recognition and applause of her audience.

"Darling!" cried Jimmy, with unbounded enthusiasm.

"Do you really—like me?" she asked, somewhat irrelevantly.

Then she leaned forward, and took hold of the lapels of his coat, thereby bringing her charming lips very close to his own, with results which might have been expected, but which appeared to surprise her.

"You can't seem to think of anything except kissing me," she reproached him, "and you know we agreed you weren't to do that, except when the cousins were around."

"But there are no cousins," he reminded her joyously. "And, anyway, that was before we were married. Being married makes a difference, Willy."

She blushed and looked dangerously pretty.

"Does it?" she asked thoughtfully.

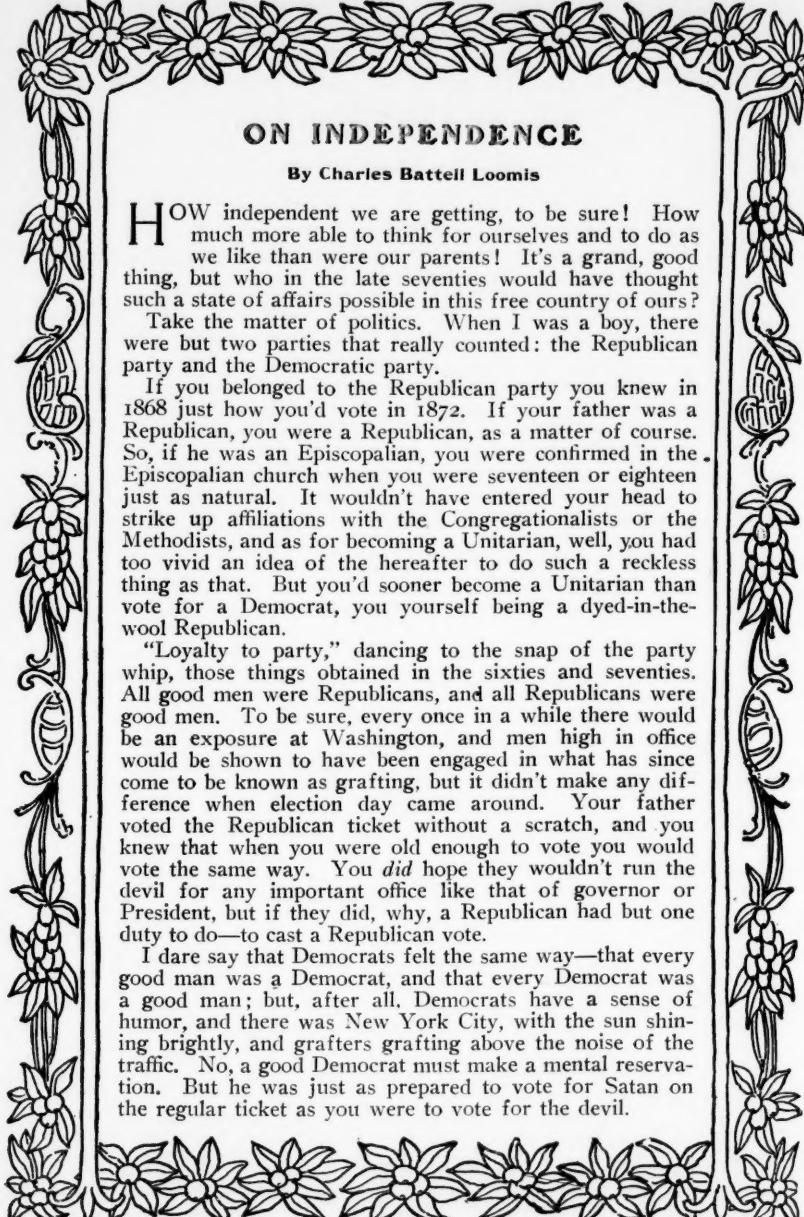
"Yes, darling!" murmured Jimmy, tightening his clasp about her waist. Then he recognized the psychological instant, but, what is more to the point, seized it.

"Do you intend to go away and leave me now, Willy?" he asked, with a melodramatic quiver in his voice.

It wasn't exactly on the square, and he knew it; but he didn't experience a single pang of repentance either then or later.

"Not—if you want me to stay, Jimmy," she whispered sweetly.





ON INDEPENDENCE

By Charles Battell Loomis

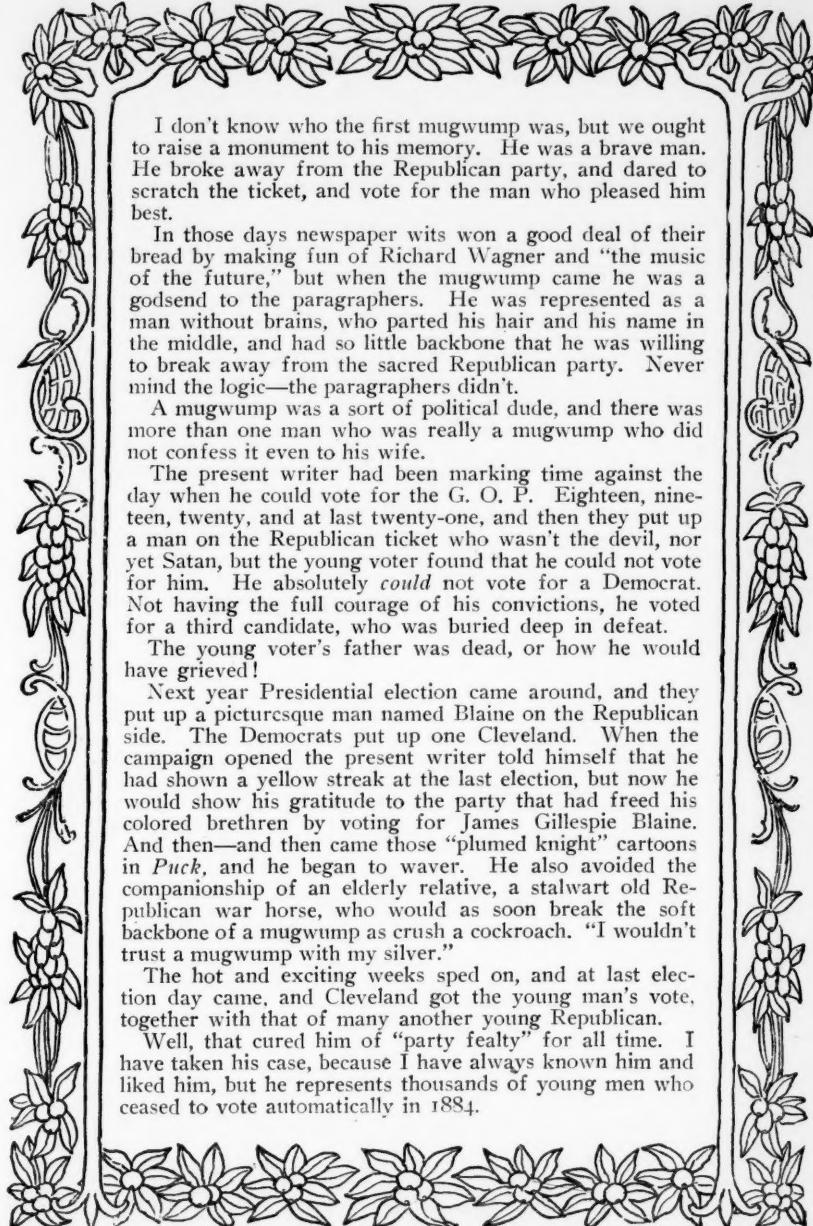
HOW independent we are getting, to be sure! How much more able to think for ourselves and to do as we like than were our parents! It's a grand, good thing, but who in the late seventies would have thought such a state of affairs possible in this free country of ours?

Take the matter of politics. When I was a boy, there were but two parties that really counted: the Republican party and the Democratic party.

If you belonged to the Republican party you knew in 1868 just how you'd vote in 1872. If your father was a Republican, you were a Republican, as a matter of course. So, if he was an Episcopalian, you were confirmed in the Episcopalian church when you were seventeen or eighteen just as natural. It wouldn't have entered your head to strike up affiliations with the Congregationalists or the Methodists, and as for becoming a Unitarian, well, you had too vivid an idea of the hereafter to do such a reckless thing as that. But you'd sooner become a Unitarian than vote for a Democrat, you yourself being a dyed-in-the-wool Republican.

"Loyalty to party," dancing to the snap of the party whip, those things obtained in the sixties and seventies. All good men were Republicans, and all Republicans were good men. To be sure, every once in a while there would be an exposure at Washington, and men high in office would be shown to have been engaged in what has since come to be known as grafting, but it didn't make any difference when election day came around. Your father voted the Republican ticket without a scratch, and you knew that when you were old enough to vote you would vote the same way. You *did* hope they wouldn't run the devil for any important office like that of governor or President, but if they did, why, a Republican had but one duty to do—to cast a Republican vote.

I dare say that Democrats felt the same way—that every good man was a Democrat, and that every Democrat was a good man; but, after all, Democrats have a sense of humor, and there was New York City, with the sun shining brightly, and grafters grafting above the noise of the traffic. No, a good Democrat must make a mental reservation. But he was just as prepared to vote for Satan on the regular ticket as you were to vote for the devil.



I don't know who the first mugwump was, but we ought to raise a monument to his memory. He was a brave man. He broke away from the Republican party, and dared to scratch the ticket, and vote for the man who pleased him best.

In those days newspaper wits won a good deal of their bread by making fun of Richard Wagner and "the music of the future," but when the mugwump came he was a godsend to the paragraphers. He was represented as a man without brains, who parted his hair and his name in the middle, and had so little backbone that he was willing to break away from the sacred Republican party. Never mind the logic—the paragraphers didn't.

A mugwump was a sort of political dude, and there was more than one man who was really a mugwump who did not confess it even to his wife.

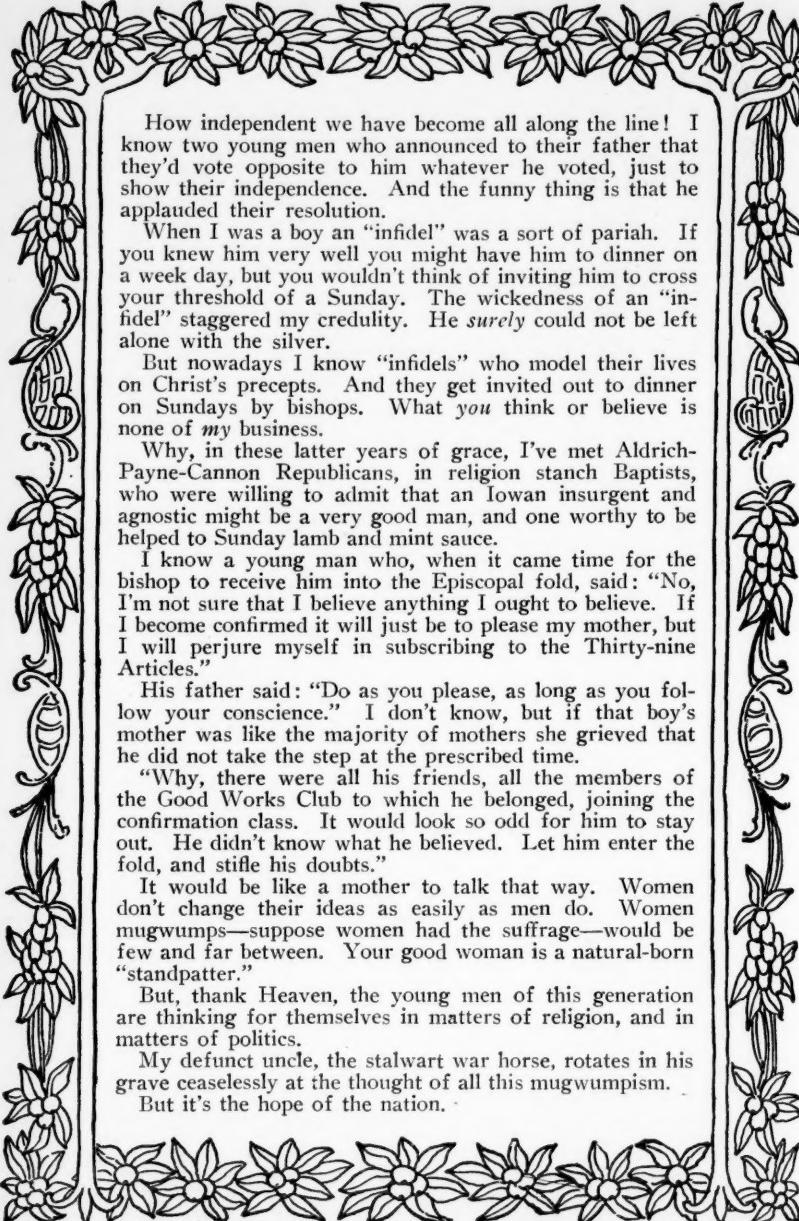
The present writer had been marking time against the day when he could vote for the G. O. P. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and at last twenty-one, and then they put up a man on the Republican ticket who wasn't the devil, nor yet Satan, but the young voter found that he could not vote for him. He absolutely *could* not vote for a Democrat. Not having the full courage of his convictions, he voted for a third candidate, who was buried deep in defeat.

The young voter's father was dead, or how he would have grieved!

Next year Presidential election came around, and they put up a picturesque man named Blaine on the Republican side. The Democrats put up one Cleveland. When the campaign opened the present writer told himself that he had shown a yellow streak at the last election, but now he would show his gratitude to the party that had freed his colored brethren by voting for James Gillespie Blaine. And then—and then came those "plumed knight" cartoons in *Puck*, and he began to waver. He also avoided the companionship of an elderly relative, a stalwart old Republican war horse, who would as soon break the soft backbone of a mugwump as crush a cockroach. "I wouldn't trust a mugwump with my silver."

The hot and exciting weeks sped on, and at last election day came, and Cleveland got the young man's vote, together with that of many another young Republican.

Well, that cured him of "party fealty" for all time. I have taken his case, because I have always known him and liked him, but he represents thousands of young men who ceased to vote automatically in 1884.



How independent we have become all along the line! I know two young men who announced to their father that they'd vote opposite to him whatever he voted, just to show their independence. And the funny thing is that he applauded their resolution.

When I was a boy an "infidel" was a sort of pariah. If you knew him very well you might have him to dinner on a week day, but you wouldn't think of inviting him to cross your threshold of a Sunday. The wickedness of an "infidel" staggered my credulity. He surely could not be left alone with the silver.

But nowadays I know "infidels" who model their lives on Christ's precepts. And they get invited out to dinner on Sundays by bishops. What *you* think or believe is none of *my* business.

Why, in these latter years of grace, I've met Aldrich-Payne-Cannon Republicans, in religion stanch Baptists, who were willing to admit that an Iowan insurgent and agnostic might be a very good man, and one worthy to be helped to Sunday lamb and mint sauce.

I know a young man who, when it came time for the bishop to receive him into the Episcopal fold, said: "No, I'm not sure that I believe anything I ought to believe. If I become confirmed it will just be to please my mother, but I will perjure myself in subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles."

His father said: "Do as you please, as long as you follow your conscience." I don't know, but if that boy's mother was like the majority of mothers she grieved that he did not take the step at the prescribed time.

"Why, there were all his friends, all the members of the Good Works Club to which he belonged, joining the confirmation class. It would look so odd for him to stay out. He didn't know what he believed. Let him enter the fold, and stifle his doubts."

It would be like a mother to talk that way. Women don't change their ideas as easily as men do. Women mugwumps—suppose women had the suffrage—would be few and far between. Your good woman is a natural-born "standpatter."

But, thank Heaven, the young men of this generation are thinking for themselves in matters of religion, and in matters of politics.

My defunct uncle, the stalwart war horse, rotates in his grave ceaselessly at the thought of all this mugwumpism.

But it's the hope of the nation.



The Inspired Story

By Mariana M. Tallman

ILLUSTRATED BY WARREN Y. CLUFF

REBECCA! Rebecca!" Mrs. Kent's trembling voice called up the attict stairs, and Mrs. Kent's feeble fingers shook the hasp of the fastened attic door. But her daughter Rebecca neither heard nor answered. She was sunk on her knees in silent prayer.

Rising at last, with a rapt look on her face, she seated herself at the dusty table, and held her pencil long poised above the paper pad. Finally, with a look of fell determination strangely mingled with her exalted expression, these words slowly shaped themselves beneath her cramped and trembling fingers:

It was a fearful cold night. The poor man did not know where to go next, and he kept walking along lest he should die if he stopped and set down.

There was a long pause. Again Rebecca bowed her head in prayer; again she resumed:

His name was Archibald. Archibald once had a good home and kind and loving friends, but now he had not got none. Sad was his lot. He felt around in his pocket to see if he had any more than a dime. He thought not, but he was not sure. No, it was just as he thought. He had not got but a dime. It was all he had in this world.

Rebecca's hand faltered and paused. Her rapt look was gone, and in its place was but a troubled perplexity. Her assets seemed as low as her Archibald's. An hour went by, and the cold

Archibald had not yet decided how to dispose of his dime. The door at the foot of the stairs softly opened, and Mrs. Kent could be heard fumbling her way up. At the top she rattled the door again.

"Rebecca! Rebecca! I'm awful afraid you'll catch cold. I've brought you up a shawl."

"Never mind, mother; I'm coming right down," called Rebecca.

And, with a long, troubled sigh, she pushed the papers into the table drawer, and left the attic and her untold tale.

It was about this time that Rebecca, incapacitated for money-making by a crippled hand, developed a penchant amounting to a mania, for small neighborhood gossip.

"Rebecca Kent's getting awful funny, ma," commented one pert miss some forty years Miss Kent's junior, as she anointed her breakfast cakes with sirup. "She leans over and listens, with her mouth and ears and eyes wide open, to everything you tell her. And she goes round asking: 'Did anything ever happen to you? Did you ever have any adventures? What do you suppose ails her, ma?'"

"Oh," responded easy-going ma comfortably, "I s'pose Rebecky's lonesome, livin' the way she does, and Miss Kent not bein' able to git round way she used to. Land, *she* was awful good comp'ny in her day. I don't see why

her girl never took after her. Rebecky don't hear nothin' sence she stopped sewin' count of her hand, and most likely she's got the old news all wore out and kind of hankers after somethin' different."

"No, ma, it ain't that," persisted her astute child. "Why, I like news, and so do you, but I never saw you listening to it as if 'twas life or death, way she does. Wait till you see her hanging over the fence, beckoning to everybody in the shape of a human being, and forever asking: 'Say, did anything interesting ever happen to you?' You'll think something ails her, I guess."

This was indeed true, as her startled interlocutors felt. One day a sulky knight of the road was lured indoors by Rebecca's persuasive voice, as he was trudging on after a brief scrutiny of the gatepost legend in tramp stenography, to the effect that the menu within was wholly unattractive. Rebecca hurriedly placed before him the whole of her small dinner; but her bounty failed to elicit anything from the tramp as he munched, save grunts and an occasional "Nope" and "Yeup."

"We are told to feed the hungry, Rebecca," mildly admonished Mrs. Kent, as the guest lurched away round the corner, "but I don't know as we're anywhere commanded to love our neighbor any *better'n* ourselves. That man looked rugged. I bet he could get work if he wanted it bad."

"I thought he might be interesting," said Rebecca briefly, "but I see he wa'n't, very."

"No, he didn't run on to no great extent," observed Mrs. Kent, with mild irony, quite lost upon her daughter, preparing now to wrestle with the double pangs of hunger and disappointment.

"Mother," she presently announced, "I'm going to set your dinner out, and go off to Greenville. There's something there I've got to 'tend to, and now you've got your mat to braid, the time will go by quick. You won't care, will you?"

"Oh, my, no, not a mite," replied Mrs. Kent cheerfully. "I'll get the

blue stripe all in. How long you going to be gone?"

"I mean to come right back, but I can't feel any ways sure. If you don't feel able to be left, mother, just say the word."

"I'm able as ever I was," rejoined her parent, with some mild heat. "All worries me is, I'm afraid you'll get run over by them trolley horse cars and otymobiles."

"I'll be careful," Rebecca promised, as she made her few preparations, and set forth, shutting the gate carefully and waving a farewell back to the old face that leaned, smiling, toward the pane, and fluttered a handkerchief limply up and down.

"She ain't got many gray hairs in her head yet," mused Rebecca fondly, "not half so many as I've got this day. It's troubles and sorrow that's brought 'em, I suppose. And, oh, good Lord, how long before hers turns white as snow, if she knew it all! How awful good that little red house does look to me, and how many times be I goin' to be permitted to gaze upon it? Oh, I must do it, I must, I must!"

And she hastened her footsteps, as if in distant Greenville were the goal of her hopes.

Mrs. Kent had had time to weary of her braiding, to finish her leisurely supper, and to strain her eyes at the window, long before her daughter's return. It was an abstracted evening that Rebecca spent, and early morning heard her announcement that she must have undisturbed solitude in the attic.

"What be you frequentin' that garret so much for, Rebecca?" her mother inquired, somewhat querulously. "Seems to me you might 'a' got things all sorted out by this time."

"Well, I think I'm pretty well through, mother, now. But I shan't want no shawl, and I don't want no supper; and if anybody comes along you 'tend to 'em. I don't want to be disturbed!"

The door resolutely closed behind her, and Mrs. Kent, after a brief meditation on the inscrutable ways of daugh-

ters, fell to absorbedly sorting out the gay woolen pieces contributed by a thoughtful neighbor for her rug.

Rebecca drew out from the drawer of the shaky old lightstand her simple literary implements once more; she then took carefully from her skirt pocket a voluminous typewritten letter, and, with careful-noting eyes, again took in its every word. It was the long-expected letter from Greenville. It bore the stamp of "Professor De Caldro, Hypnotist and Astrologer."

"Now, I must let the spell work, and not think no thoughts of my own," murmured Rebecca; and, grasping her pencil firmly in her fingers, she awaited inspiration with shining, rapt eyes.

An expectant hush lay over all her bare surroundings. A little mouse flitted about, unscared. Presently a sentence shaped itself from the fog of the writer's confused imaginings:

Oh, how beautiful upon the mountains did the morning break after that night of storm. Tell me not it was but calm after the storm, it was peace and good will upon earth. Peace to souls that were sin-sick weary, and they departed in peace and sinned no more. Then did the boy arise and say: "Father, forgive me." And they, too, went forth, and the sun shone on the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. And lo, in the wilderness they met a shining one, but they trembled not, neither were they afraid. They went where the angel led.

On and on did the all-commanding source of Rebecca's inspiration also lead her, her pencil flying, her cheeks pink with excitement. For an hour she wrote unceasingly, but at last the pencil paused, and dropped from her cramped fingers. She leaned back, with a long sigh, and closed her eyes.

"Oh, how tired I be!" she murmured. "O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard my prayer." She gazed reverently at the many sheets of scribbled paper. "I know it's a beautiful story—I never could have wrote it myself. There's things in it I don't even know what they mean!"

When she once more descended to the warm kitchen, she was amazed to find that hours had flown. Her mother, bearing herself with silent dignity, was

preparing the evening meal, fully intending not to address her erring daughter. But curiosity proved too strong.

"Rebecca, will you tell me what in the name o' goodness possesses you to ha'nt that garret this chilly time o' year?"

Rebecca thought a minute.

"I've been reading a story," she said.

"Well, why couldn't you 'a' set here and read it out loud, all pleasant and comfortable, while I braided? 'Twouldn't have put me out none. You ain't a mite sociable lately, Rebecca. You act as if you had something on your mind. Does anything ail you?"

"Not a thing, mother," assured Rebecca. "And I'll read you the story by 'n' by. I'd like to know what you think of it."

Soothed and flattered by this deference, Mrs. Kent was soon smiling again. When it had grown quite dark, Rebecca brought from the parlor the best lamp, and set it on the supper table.

"I don't feel a mite hungry, mother, and I'll read while you eat."

In low and shaking tones she began the product of inspiration by absent treatment, as laid down in the letter she had received—a letter which her experience had not detected to be a circular, as it abounded in what had seemed to her the warmest expressions of personal interest.

How superior this narrative to the homely tale of Archibald, that had died upon her faltering pen! She read on and on for several pages, and then, hardly daring to frame the question, she raised her eyes and hesitatingly inquired:

"How—how do you—like it, mother?"

Mrs. Kent placidly sipped her tea and pondered:

"Seems to me it sounds sort o' ramblin' an' foolish," she remarked, at length.

She was not prepared for the startling effect of this innocent declaration. Rebecca started to her feet. She flung the packet upon the floor.

"I knew it—I knew it!" she cried, in

agonized tones; and, bursting into a torrent of wailing sobs, fled from the room, leaving her mother in amazed alarm.

For, as Rebecca had read aloud, sending out the inspired utterances into the commonplace air of her kitchen, a haunting fear of the truth of what her mother had just now so candidly voiced took possession of her—a misgiving unacknowledged even to herself till her critic's words so cruelly crystallized it. Was it possible that she was deceived—that in spite of hopes, prayers, and tears, she might not be the vessel to

misgiving raised by the first failure, and would persuade her that the product of absent treatment was all that could be desired in the way of a literary gem.

"Another journey off to town," mourned Mrs. Kent. "Rebecca, you're so awful full of mysteries I don't hardly know you. When be you goin' to put an end to 'em?"

"I'm going to tell you all about it pretty soon, mother," soothed Rebecca. "That is, if there is anything to tell. If there ain't, I don't want you should ask me anything about it. I've got to go to Greenville again, that's all, and don't you worry."

Rebecca now, after much anguish of spirit, doubts, perplexities, and fervent study of advertising columns, sought a certain Madame Sylvie, loudly heralded as a most marvelous medium. It was a medium that Rebecca wished. She had made up her mind that she was not one herself, and that therein lay failure. One who had been born into mysteries, and walked familiarly with unseen powers—such a one she should have sought in person, in the first place. Ah, well, one must live and learn. If only she had her precious dollar back!

Madame Sylvie opened the door herself to her caller. What might be termed a near-white scarf draped her somewhat negligently fastened bodice, and her short, black hair curled in fascinating ringlets upon her ample brow. She seated her caller on a sofa, in a boudoir smelling of cabbage, and placed her own chair before her.

"State your business," she directed. "Do you wish me to go into a trance at once, or will you unbosom your heart to me a little first?"

Rebecca nervously hastened to unburden her heart, not feeling sure but Madame Sylvie would be deaf and blind to all earthly things, once entered on her trance, nor whether this interest-



In low and shaking tones she began the product of inspiration by absent treatment.

receive words of inspiration from on high?

"But they wa'n't my words," she thought, eagerly grasping for refutation of this unwelcome visitant doubt. "I never could 'a' wrote so without something sort o' compellin' me. It must be if it ain't right, it's because I'm so ignorant, and couldn't put them beautiful thoughts into good-sounding words. I must write to that professor again, and ask him if he thinks his treatment is working all right."

But even this she did not do, her remnant of shrewd common sense, underlying her eager desire, telling her that a second letter would undo all the

ing event might not occur at any instant.

"I want to write a beautiful story," she began. "I've got to write one. I've tried it all alone by myself with prayer and wrastling, but I don't get no results. And then I tried it with absent treatment, but I'm afraid the conditions wasn't right, somehow. I wrote and wrote, and at first I thought it was beautiful, but there don't seem to be no real story to it, after all. I don't believe 'twas nothin' more'n I've read out the Bible and heard the minister talk."

Madame Sylvie shook her black head firmly.

"Absent treatment is not operative on the ignorant. It cannot perform miracles. The ignorant will remain so; all will act out their natures. If you sought to write a book——"

"Only a story," murmured Rebecca.

"A story, no power could make the illiterate tongue literate. Why did you wish to write a—— Or, stay; I will go into my trance, and reveal all. Remain seated; fear me not. I will return to you. But, first, I must pierce the future, and see what it holds in store for you."

Madame Sylvie folded her hands in her lap, shuddered, and, with an agility born of long practice, passed away. Her ample frame, to be sure, remained, material, but her soul—ah, that was traveling far from scenes of space and time.

"I see," she said dreamily, at length, "a beautiful angel form. Oh, how sweetly she smiles, and she seems to hold out her hands in blessing."

She paused; her caller was silent. She proceeded:

"Can it be a mother? She seems to be inquiring for some one. Have you recently lost your dear mother?"

"My mother is still living," whispered Rebecca.

"It is your mother's mother," declared Madame Sylvie, with conviction. "She is now smiling a blessing to her child. And what is this beautiful, childish form hovering in the air? You have lost no child?"

"I never had one," said Rebecca, with flaming cheeks. "I am not married."

"No—but your mother had other children?"

"One boy."

"A *be-au-tiful* little boy?" cried madame rapturously.

"No, I think I have heard my mother say he was a very plain child," replied Rebecca simply.

Madame Sylvie looked, even in her entranced state, a trifle disconcerted. But swiftly rallying, she cried:

"Ah, but he is *beautiful now*. And I see more than this. I see a large sum of money hovering over some one's head. Who can this lone, solitary woman be? I know not, but I can see this prize descending, and, while she waits, the black clouds all roll away, and a heavenly light s-s-streams all along the pathway"—Madame Sylvie wildly gesticulated—"to where that poor woman and her mother waits, and it lights up all the long, hard road before, and streams aw-a-y up, up, till it is lost in something so b-e-au-tiful my eyes do not dare behold it. Ah, what a heavenly picture!"

Madame Sylvie's fluttering, heavily ringed hands, which had been following this ecstatic vision heavenward, now dropped into her lap; she ceased to speak. She sighed, clasped her hands together with a loud, resounding smack, shuddered once more, opened her eyes, and, smiling blandly into the fixed countenance of her guest, inquired, in an easy, conversational tone:

"Won't you lay off your bonnet?"

Rebecca drew a deep breath. Her hostess had soared to heaven and returned to earth with such rapidity as to be dizzying.

"N-no, thank you," she said timidously. "Can—can you remember anything you've just been saying?"

Madame Sylvie shook her head, with a pitying smile.

"My recollection ceases from the moment when I asked you to be seated."

Here, at last, was the true fount. How wonderful it seemed! Rebecca hesitated no longer.

"I want you," she said, with a firm-

ness which surprised herself, "to take some hours and all day, if it is necessary, and be a medium for the story that I've got to write. You must get one of them shorthand writers, so she can keep up with you, and she must set down every single word you say, and write it out. Now, what shall you charge me for having a trance with a shorthand girl along? I've thought it all out, and I know it's the way to do. I don't want you should charge no price that's unreasonable, because I can't pay it, and I shall find another medium. But if it's reasonable I shall get it somehow."

Madame Sylvie, apparently sunk in meditation, looked her visitor over with shrewd eye, appraising her.

"I couldn't go into a trance of a half hour's duration for—well, for not less than five dollars, at the very least. I ought to ask more, and I would if this was something more commonly called for, for it is very exhausting indeed." And she passed a dingy handkerchief over her brow.

"Then I will pay you the money when I see the story all wrote out, and see if it sounds as if it had more sense than what I've been getting. When can you have this trance?"

"I can't have it to-morrow," mused Madame Sylvie, "as several prominent business men will call in relation to important commercial ventures. Neither can I on the next day, as my followers meet for a séance. But on Friday—yes, I think we can make it Friday. The bell rings; shall I show you out by a private exit?"

And, with some suddenness, Rebecca found herself in the back yard, whence she made the best of her way streetward.

It seemed long now, to wait until Madame Sylvie sent her word that the wonderful story had materialized, and been transcribed.

"The spirits have been most kind," remarked that lady on Rebecca's arrival. "Scarcely had I seated myself, and closed my eyes, when I found myself taken full possession of. The young lady told me she could hardly keep

pace with my rapid utterance. It is a very bulky revelation, you see."

Yes, Rebecca saw, with joy. She glanced hastily through the opening lines, saw that her interest and excitement were at once aroused, and gave up her crumpled five-dollar bill eagerly. Bearing the precious manuscript, with something, perhaps, of the feeling of Moses as he hastened down the mount, she sought the refuge of home, to read and rejoice.

Night had fallen as she hastened through the little village, greeting the young minister so joyously that his heart lightened within him. Rumors of the Kents' growing poverty had reached him.

"Miss Kent must have had good news," he thought.

Mrs. Kent had just finished setting the tea table.

"I've made you some nice milk toast," she said eagerly. "Don't it smell good? The bread was all dried up, and I thought o' toast. Let's hurry and eat. Ain't you all beat out?"

"No, I hadn't thought about it. The toast does smell good, mother. We'll eat supper, and then I'll read you another story. I've just brought it home—I ain't read it myself yet."

It took an hour to read the story—longer because of the puzzling handwriting. However, this but enhanced their interest, and she laid down the last sheet with shining eyes.

"Oh, mother, don't you think that is a wonderful story? Don't you?" she demanded feverishly.

"Oh, my, I should say 'twas!" fervently assented Mrs. Kent. "I don't see how anybody ever thought of it. Do you suppose there is any such a place, Rebecca?" she pursued, in lowered tones.

"I believe there's stranger places on earth than anybody knows about as yet," responded Rebecca, with awe. "Oh, my, I shall dream about that story, I know I shall." She rose and paced the room. Her eyes were shining, her whole appearance was transfigured. "Don't you think it was wonderful, mother?" she entreated again.



"I see," she said dreamily, "a beautiful angel form."

"I told you once I did. Land sakes, Rebecca! What makes you act so proud, sort of, about it? Anybody would most think you wrote it yourself."

"Mother"—Rebecca came to a solemn halt—"mother, I don't know but what I did!"

"Rebecca Kent, be you crazy?"

"I don't know," pursued Rebecca, "whether it was me, or the Lord, or the medium. Oh, I wisht I did know!"

Mrs. Kent rose, and came to her daughter's side.

"Rebecca, you go and lay down. You've be'n going off too much, and you've traveled on a empty stomach, and your supper's gone to your head. You're feverish, an' I want to see your tongue."

Rebecca laughed hysterically.

"No, I ain't, mother, and my tongue don't look no different from yours. I was talking kind of foolish, I know I was. I won't say no more about it, mother."

Mrs. Kent closed her lips firmly, and shook her head. She said no more, but her eyes followed her daughter furtively about, till their early bedtime.

Rebecca, spite of her fresh cares, was a sound sleeper. Her mother lay motionless beside her till she was sure her daughter was fairly off to Slumberland. Then, with infinite pains, she slipped into the flannel wrapper that always lay, ready for need, beside the bed; she peeped out and across the way. Yes, the light still shone in the doctor's office.

Mrs. Kent hurried out across like a frightened little animal. The door opened to her timid knock; the doctor admitted her. When it again opened, the doctor, though always courteous of bearing, wore an amused smile.

"No, you needn't be at all alarmed," he was assuring Mrs. Kent. "Whatever it is, it will all wear away; and it is probably no more than some little mystery your daughter sees fit to keep

from you. Say nothing, and she will tell you all about it of her own accord presently. Pshaw! No, her mind is as sound as yours or mine. Go home, and go to sleep."

Mrs. Kent sped back, and again, with infinite pains, disrobed. She looked long and searchingly at the placid face on the pillow. She shook her head.

"I ain't half persuaded, jest the same," she murmured.

"Flora—Flora Allen?" hailed Rebecca from her window the next morning, as that small damsel hastened by on her way to school. "You stop a minute."

"I can't," called Flora. "I'm late. The first bell's rung."

"I won't keep you but a minute. I want to know if you ain't got a typewriter machine up to your house."

"Why, yes," answered Flora, walking slowly backward, "or my sister has. Why, do you want to get some work done? She'll do some for nothing, because she can't typewrite very good yet. She don't want to charge anything till she gets used to it."

"I want to know! I'm going right up to see her now. Is she to home?"

"She is now," said Flora, breaking into a run. "If you hurry right along you'll catch her."

Rebecca hurried, tucking her precious manuscript into her pocket, and snatching up a head covering.

"I'm going to write a great long story out next week," observed Annie Allen, on being interviewed, "for a real author, and she's going to pay me for it, and I want to get into practice. It looks kind of smeary now, for I forgot to space sometimes, and hit Q for A, and things like that, so I shouldn't want to charge you."

"I don't care how it looks, if you get the words all in, an' get 'em right, and it's awful good in you to do it for nothing, Annie. When will you have it done? And where is that author, Annie?"

"She's Miss Noble, and she's boarding up to Kinnecom's, 'count of her health. Why, I guess I could get it

done Monday, Rebecca, but I go awful slow."

"Well, hurry all you can, and I'll be ever so much obliged. But I wouldn't lose it for anything, not for *anything*, Annie, because I ain't got no copy. I must get back, now; mother will worry."

Annie read a few pages of the story in silence.

"My, that's a great story, mother," she observed. "I wonder where Rebecca Kent got it."

"Maybe she wrote it, same as that author does."

"Oh, mercy, no, mother," scorned Annie. "Why, she couldn't write any such story as that, not to save her life. Most likely she copied it out of some book. I ain't going to read any more now; I'll read as I copy, and enjoy it more."

Miss Noble, author and invalid, in her quiet retreat at the Kinnecoms, was one day surprised by an early caller. At nine of the morning Rebecca Kent, in her rusty best, was shown in. Much wondering, Miss Noble made her comfortable, and awaited developments.

"I'm going to tell you all about everything, because I ain't got any one else to tell, and I heard you was an authoress, and I thought you might know. You'll be going off so soon you won't tell folks round here, will you?"

"You may trust me," said Miss Noble. "Are you in trouble? Do talk to me freely."

"Yes, I be," assented Rebecca, warmed by the friendly voice, the sympathetic face. "I'm in awful trouble—nobody but the Lord knows. I'm keeping it from my mother, and I've hoped and prayed she won't find it out if the worst comes to the worst; and I've asked for a leading, and I've toiled, and vowed—you don't know. But if it don't come right—listen"—Rebecca drew near and whispered—"we've got to go to the poorhouse!"

Miss Noble uttered a compassionate exclamation.

"Yes, we have. There ain't a soul can help us, there ain't nothing more I can do. I thought I had my leading.

One day—I want to tell you all about it—when I'd been craving some sign from the Lord, just as quick as I got up from my knees I found this."

Rebecca drew forth and laid in Miss Noble's hand a much-worn newspaper clipping, headed:

"One Thousand Dollars for a Short Story."

She waited, with round eyes, for comment; none came. Miss Noble merely said, "Yes?" as if expecting more, and Rebecca faltered on:

"I know folks' don't write stories without they've got something to tell, and know how to tell it. But I thought—I thought—why, there wa'n't nobody could want money quite so bad as I did, with their old mother all happy and contented, sittin' by the fireplace rockin' all cheerful an' peaceful, in the little house that had always been hers, makin' all her little plans for next spring, and all, you know, Miss Noble."

Her voice choked and stopped. Miss Noble nodded.

"I know," she murmured.

"Oh, it seems as if I couldn't have it so no ways. She—she couldn't be happy. My mother was brought up nice; she wa'n't used to work hard, and do without. And she never asked much, either; 'twouldn't take but jest a little to make her happy. I always looked forward to givin' her a better time than what she's had after she lost father. I thought some day we'd fix up the house nicer, and have a bay window, and a canary bird would sing. And, instead of that—oh, instead of that, how be I goin' to tell her what's comin'?"

She went on and on, pouring out the whole story of struggle, and hope, and heartbreak. She had known, she said, that she had nothing in her own life, or her life's knowledge, from which to frame a story, and she had sought everywhere for material worthy. And finally, in her despair, she had thought that she might perchance pluck the laurel of genius, if love and energy and desperate earnestness might so serve. But serve they would not, she had found to her sorrow. The product of absent treatment and the madame were

described, and then Rebecca came to the heart of her latest depression.

"I know I've got a beautiful story at last," she said. "And at first I was so happy, till the thought came to me: *Was it my story?* If I could be sure 'twas, I'd ask no more. There wouldn't have been no story, would there, if I hadn't hired a medium to have a trance? It was the same as mine, wasn't it, if 'twas my money drawed it down from heaven, don't you think? Or had I ought to give Madame Sylvie half the money if I should get it? But, then, you see, *she* didn't know anything at all about it, she said she didn't. Wasn't it all for me? Oh, I don't know what to do, and I thought mebbe you, bein' a stranger and not all mixed up laying awake nights and thinking about it, could tell me."

"Let me see the story. You have it with you, have you not?"

She laid it in Miss Noble's hand. Annie Allen had typewritten it quite neatly, after all. It was called: "The Strange Ride of Meredith Jones."

Miss Noble pressed her hand to her forehead.

"Why—where—no, that is all right. It reminded me of something. Let me read a little."

She read in silence down the page, her brow still gathered in a slight frown of perplexity. Suddenly she lifted her head.

"My dear Miss Kent," she said, "I am afraid your troubles are not quite over yet. I can tell you just one thing at present, and that is that neither the Lord nor Madame Sylvie nor you wrote that story. I have read it already, my dear."

"You have—read it?" gasped Rebecca.

Miss Noble nodded, with a pitying smile.

"In a book—printed."

She went to one of her bookcases, stood deliberating a moment, and then, slipping out a volume, turned its pages. Presently she laid it in Rebecca's lap.

There is, as the conjurors say, no deception about this tale. Jukes by accident stumbled upon a village that is well known to



Rebecca laid in Miss Noble's hand a much-worn newspaper clipping, headed: "One Thousand Dollars for a Short Story."

exist, though he is the only Englishman who has been there. A somewhat similar institution used to flourish on the outskirts of Calcutta, and there is a story that if you go into the heart of Bikanir, which is the heart of the Great Indian Desert, you shall come across not a village, but a town where the dead who did not die, but may not live, have established their headquarters.

There was a long silence. Rebecca was past tears and lamentation now. She did not need to glance at the manuscript she knew so well; the "deadly parallel" was manifest.

She rose at last, with a pale face and set lips.

"It ain't no use my talking any more to you," she said, in a hard, dry voice. "The Lord has turned away His face from me. Mebbe you're going to try to get that prize?" she questioned.

Miss Noble shook her head.

"I promised my doctor faithfully I would write no more for at least six months," she said. "Dear Miss Kent, please don't leave me like this—there must be some other way; let us think it out together."

But Rebecca would stay for no more.

"Mebbe some other time," she said brokenly. "I—I must get home. Mother will be wanting me."

She never came again.

The long winter wore away, and the first breath of spring was upon the little village. Miss Noble had long since turned to her city home. The minister looked at the closed blinds of the Kents' little cottage more anxiously, where no one stirred within. There had been little fire or fuel, and popular tradition had it the Kents "laid abed all day to keep warm."

Just what straits they were in, no one knew, for since the light had failed

Rebecca, she had kept quite by herself, and had repulsed the friendly offers of small aid. Now the mortgage on the little red house was foreclosed. Rebecca's distress became suddenly comprehensible. A great light broke upon the villagers. The young minister had done his best, with a subscription list, for the household; but nobody was rich, or even well to do, in the village, and his effort had fallen flat.

Miss Kent was waiting for him at the gate one night, to his surprise, shivering in the little red shawl flung over her head.

"Mr. Armstrong," she began, in a low, dull voice, laying her hand on his sleeve, "I want you should tell me how folks breaks it to their mothers that they've got to go to the poorhouse? How do they tell 'em they ain't never to have a home no more, and have got to eat the bread of strangers? Mr. Armstrong, ain't there no one in all this village that would take my mother in, think, and kind of do for her, while I went to the poorhouse? They could have all my things if they would. Wouldn't it keep her for any length of time, think?"

"I am so sorry, Miss Kent, so very sorry," began Mr. Armstrong embarrassedly. "I have thought, and prayed, and tried this thing so many times. But do you think yourself that your mother would be happy by herself, knowing that you—er—where you would be?"

"No, I don't, honest, Mr. Armstrong. But let me ask you this: If there ain't no place on all the earth for my mother but just the poorhouse, don't you think it might be right to let us fix up things and—and never let her know where she was?"

And in sad course of time, in spite of tears and entreaties, in spite of prayers and agonizing, even both these strange things came to pass.

There came a day when a wagon halted before the little red house, and Mrs. Kent, smiling and happy, led the way forth, her little black hand bag on her arm, while the neighbors peeped furtively from their windows.

"Seems so there ought to be more round to see us off," she commented, a little wistfully, peering about for familiar faces. "Bubby, you tell your ma I'm awfully sorry she didn't get over to see us before we got started, and tell her to be sure to come right in soon's we get back. Rebecca's going to have the place all fixed up nice, and I expect 'twill take considerable time. Rebecca, shall we get back before dandelion greens is gone, think?"

"Oh, mother, I don't know," said Rebecca, in smothered tones.

Tears were streaming blindingly down her face under the thick veil, and she struggled unseeingly with the little gate catch. The man helped them up into the wagon, set the shabby trunks in, and whipped up his horse.

"Did you hear what she said?" excitedly whispered a neighbor behind the shutter. "She thinks they're coming back! She thinks they're going off to have the place fixed up. Don't you suppose she knows?"

And, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Kent did not, nor ever knew. For so much her daughter thanked the Lord.

One winter day, Rebecca stole out of the poorhouse, and down the road. She wore always the thick veil she had donned on departing. She could not bear the light of day. She had grown old and strangely weak. Now she had but one all-consuming thought; it was to find, at the village stationery store, a copy of the magazine that was to contain the great prize story. She felt that she must know what sort of inspiration was the right one, since hers had been a false light from first to last.

"I wisht I knew," she murmured to herself, "who 'twas that got the story, and whether she lived in the poorhouse, and how old her mother was, and if they ate frozen potatoes and apples all winter. Oh, how be I talking? I believe to my soul I shall go crazy!"

She checked her rambling speech, hastened her footsteps, and, with trembling hands, effected the exchange of a silver quarter for a copy of the desired magazine.

"I believe, as I live, that was Rebecca Kent!" whispered the girl behind the counter to a friend. "She lives in the poorhouse. Did you see what she bought—a magazine! Don't you believe she's sort of crazy?"

Rebecca at last stole up the poorhouse steps again. Old Sally, with white hair cropped close, and a very short skirt on, leaned over the rail. She had an apple and a caseknife in her hand. She was scraping off the soft pulp and mumbling it in her toothless mouth.

"Say, there's a man upstairs in your room," she called out, peering up cunningly into Rebecca's unseeing face. "Talking to your ma. I guess he's come to marry her—he! he!"

Mr. Armstrong sat in the upper room which Rebecca and her mother called their own, though two other old women shared it with them. But Rebecca hardly accosted him. She sat down and began cutting the leaves in a kind of frenzy. Presently she uttered an exclamation, and jumped to her feet. Her face was very wild and strained.

"Oh, ain't there nobody decent and fit to be trusted, on all this wide, sinful earth?" she demanded, in wild tones. "Oh, I thought she was good, and look what she's done, look what she's done!"

It was long before Mr. Armstrong could be made to comprehend. He saw before him a story entitled, "The Annals of the Poor," and signed "Blanche Noble." He looked at the signature uncomprehendingly, though it was a familiar one to him—as to a wider world likewise. More than one volume bearing it lay among the well-read books of his study. He had never connected it with his new friend who had come and gone this last summer.

"She's got it," she repeated. "She's got the prize. She told me she wouldn't—she promised faithfully she wouldn't tell anybody, and here she's gone and printed it all in the magazine, where everybody can see. I don't care if there is other names. They'll all know who 'tis. Oh, I wish I was dead, I do, I do, and I'd go straight to see if the Lord was all a sham, too, for I don't expect nothing else."

The young minister went away sadly perplexed. He had admired Miss Noble very much, and could hardly understand the incoherent tale of treachery that Rebecca had poured out. He wished he might see Miss Noble, and get at the rights of this very upsetting story. Only to-day he had received a note from her, begging him to send an inclosed five dollars from her to Rebecca. She wrote:

Tell her it belongs to her by right, and I think she will understand where I got it. I have exerted myself to get it for her, and as I do not know whether she is still living in her old home or not, would you kindly inform me when you acknowledge receipt of this?

Was it, indeed, possible that these paltry five dollars were a sort of conscience fund? He had not dared mention them to Rebecca, though they had been his original errand. As he strolled meditatively homeward in the pleasant April sunshine, his spirits were very low, indeed. He tried to think this was solely on the Kents' account, but honesty compelled him to acknowledge it was partly because of Miss Noble. She was less fine, less high, than he had thought her. And why should he not be grieved because of that, also? Why not, indeed? he asked himself defiantly. The spring light and joy were in the air, and a robin caroled blithely high on a swaying elm bough, but life was very sorrowful.

Arrived at home, the old housekeeper met him at the door.

"There's another letter come," she said. "I laid it on your study table; it looked important."

"Thank you, Mrs. Blair," said the minister absently, and entered his study.

The letter read:

MY DEAR MR. ARMSTRONG: This seems a very immediate postscript, but I have news of more importance. I want you to go straight to the Kents—for I have learned since writing where they are—and make them understand that they are to return home at once, and for always. God has been very good to us, Mr. Armstrong, and I want you to take this inclosed letter to Miss Kent, and give it to her when you give my message, and let her tell you what she will.

BLANCHE NOBLE.

Once more the minister came to the poorhouse, but as an evangel.

Rebecca Kent placed in his hand, with a face transfigured, and no power of words, the third message from Miss Noble:

DEAR MISS KENT: You were sure there was no other way—and I could think of none. But I lay awake all through that silent night after you had left me, and thought and thought. The story you had told me was so much sadder, and stranger, and newer than anything I had ever been able to invent that all at once—like one of your divine leadings, dear Miss Kent—the thought came to me that perhaps I might be permitted to tell it. I rose and lit my lamp.

I, too, Miss Kent, bowed my head and asked God's leading for the sake of the old mother, waiting in happy ignorance at home. It was your story, dear woman, that I wrote, just as you told it to me—not mine at all. I knew the Lord and the good doctor would forgive me for trying just once more, though I had broken my promise, for I knew it would harm me less to write than to long to so.

I wrote, and wrote, and by morning it was done. I was only the mouthpiece, as I had longed to be. And tell me if there was any other place for the reward to go, but for the use and behoof of the dear old mother, God bless her!

The little house will be yours again, whenever you go back, and there is to be a bay window, and a bird will sing.

Let me come and see you, please, when you

are under the snug little red roof again, and meanwhile I am, with much love,
Your friend,
BLANCHE NOBLE.

Mr. Armstrong was manfully unmindful of the tears that filled his eyes.

"She—she is a noble woman," he said unsteadily. "Her name belongs to her."

He did not add that he knew it now to be a great name—one that had won for itself fame and honor. The joyous discovery that his summer friend and the woman who spoke to the world were one, he reserved till he could say it to the name's owner.

Once more the wagon with the trunks, Rebecca, and Rebecca's mother, drove slowly down the village street.

"I see new paint on the fence, Rebecca," Mrs. Kent announced jubilantly. "I shouldn't 'a' thought they'd had us gone so long jest to do that; still, the smell of paint does make some sick, I know. Here's Bubby again. Tell your ma to come right in soon's she can. Oh, my, Rebecca, the dandelions ain't all gone yet! Can't we dig us a mess o' greens 'fore it comes dark, and have for supper, think? The sun's full high yet, and 'twill be a long, pleasant twilight."



Rose, Thou Art Dead

ROSE, thou art dead, and the glory of June hath departed!
Ashen thy petals, and scattered thy love-laden breath.
Rose over-red, the adored, the divine, and deep-hearted,
Spendthrift, and splendid, and reckless of winter or death.

Rose, thou hast lived—from thine earliest unprisoned hour!
Wooed of the nightingale, warmed by the amorous breeze,
Won at the last by the sun as he kissed thee to flower,
Thou hast drunk of the sweet earth-wine to its deep-red lees.

Fair Cleopatra of flow'rs, thy lovers come after!
All the bright hosts of the summer shall turn now and flee.
Turn in the midday of triumph from song, and sunlight, and laughter,
For what unto us is a world that is barren of thee?

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON.



In Time Of Wild Asters

By
Marion Hill

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

I SUPPOSE it would be foolish to say that that hat looks as if it were made of blue sky, trimmed with a bunch of sunshine on the left side; but such is the effect," he said, with an attempt at ease, as he rather anxiously threw a glance at the face under the hat.

His glances, as a rule, at least when applied to Josephine, were not "thrown," but were of a lingering quality; nor was he, as a rule, an anxious kind of a young man. But he had just cast a bomb, and knew it, even while pretending valiantly to the contrary. And how much devastation that bomb would make when it burst was concerning William Dillingham not a little, for all his noble air of ease.

"Oh, how can you speak of hats after what you did?" cried Josephine, sinking limply into a chair and putting her hands removingly to the headgear she had but that moment donned, almost as if the recent calamity precluded the possibility of her ever taking a morning walk again. But she was too stunned to cope successfully with such stabbing and unwary things as hatpins, and therefore let her hands drop unperformingly back into her lap.

Her eyes were sincerely accusing.

To be looked at accusingly, really accusingly, through lashes which dipped down like dark wings, and actually and literally got tangled in their own lengths,

was very upsetting—even to this calm young man who was inured to a great deal in that line of experience.

"Why, what *did* I do?" he asked, a shade nervously, flicking a quick look around her familiar apartment, as if hunting for *mene, mene, tarkel upharsin* among its bric-à-brac.

"Asked me to marry you," said Josephine, her small teeth clenched, so that the words came with a struggle.

He looked vastly relieved, and breathed better.

"That's all right, then, Josephine. That's what I meant."

"Oh, think, think!" she begged, the lashes sweeping bewilderingly up.

They quite dazed and dizzyed him.

"About what, Josephine?"

"About our marrying," she whispered, and down the lashes drooped again.

"With pleasure, Josephine," he said obediently; and there was a happy sort of catch in his breath and an outreaching radiance about his manner that warned her to look up in time.

"Don't joke, Billy," she advised quickly, shrinking back ever so little in her chair. "This is serious."

The shrinking worried him.

"Is it?" he asked shortly. "To which of us?"

"To me," she answered, with a soft gentleness which was plainly intended to rebuke his too crisp tones.

"At last!" he said, in vicious satisfaction. "It has been serious to *me* for months!"

"Months, Billy?" She went swiftly after the word, and caught it before she could stop herself. "Only months?" There was subtle discontent in the faint arching of her brows. With every insinuating suggestiveness, she hinted: "We have known each other three years."

Hard silence.

It gave her time to remember how she could be arch and annoying; so she said, with cheerful flippancy:

"You might have stretched a point and said 'years,' Billy."

"Months," he repeated doggedly; but there was such gloomy faithfulness in his eyes that she took heart to ask:

"How many?" Her tones were soft and small.

"Thirty-six," morosely.

"Oh, Billy!" she gasped, not able to keep her commendation under.

He made a sanguine snatch at hope, and most manfully took hold of something tangible and near, as an anchor to his spirituality.

"Surely that 'Oh, Billy!' means 'Yes,' Josephine!"

"It does not, it does not! Let go my hand right away!" she cried, in a panic so real that he let go on the word. "Thank you," she said, faintly and politely. "Thank you. That's the nicest part of you, Billy."

"What is?" he demanded ferociously, his voice fairly kicking any compliment afar. "What is?"

"That you aren't familiar, aren't the pawing kind," she said, with sweet explicitness.

"Well, I am," he contradicted darkly.

Disdain bade her keep silent, but curiosity finally forced from her this:

"With whom, pray?"

"With you," a little defiantly.

"I'd like to know when!" was her scornful self-defense.

"Would you, Josephine?" he asked, growing humble and tender as a result of his memories. "Would you, Josephine? Then I'll tell you, dear. It's when I'm away from you.

"You have, however far I be,
A trick of coming near to me;
Though out of sight, not out of mind,
So kind you are and so unkind."

"And often, oh, in times of moonlight and times of starlight, you come close to my side, Josephine, and I take your hand, I hold you to me, I——"

"Stop—stop saying such awful things!" she commanded, the blush on her face growing so unbearably painful that she covered it with her two hands, sharpest distress in the action. Then, miserably from behind them: "Spoiling such a beautiful morning."

So unstudied, so palpably real was this shuddering withdrawal of hers, that its meaning hit him hard.

"Oh, you may take your hands down any time you like," he granted coldly and angrily. "I fancy I've quite done talking." Wonderingly: "So you don't really care for me, after all?"

"Too much to marry you," she urged, her hands in her lap again, locking and unlocking nervously. Her look at him was straight and unwavering. "Too much to marry you."

"*That!*" he scorned. "The same old quibble set on its same old pedestal!"

"With Truth, in tears, at the base of it," she said, with a breathless sigh like a sob. "If I marry you, I lose you, Billy. I do, indeed. Oh, don't interrupt for a while! Let me talk this all out to you in a personal way. I've done it often enough before, when it's been only a theory. It was real to me even then, and it's real to anguish now. For you know, well as I do, what married people are—the kind that have become used to each other. They seem to get talked out. And the faces of married people—why, they actually *fade!* They do. Even their eyes don't shine. Dark and cold as a theater when the show is over.

"Billy, I couldn't stand it; I really couldn't. You are the only friend I have. And I want to keep you. I need you so—all alone in the world as I am. How good you've been to me—up to now. 'Marry you?' Never! Oh, why did you spoil it all? You were the dearest thing on earth to me, Billy, and



"Billy, won't you please keep friends with me, dear? See what a nice day we've had, unmarried!"

you knew it. The splendid, stanch, loyal good times we had together! The whole year was just a calendar of joyous happenings.

"For both of us were outdoor tramps by nature. And we were out all the time. Weather was nothing to us. If it were January, while others hugged a stuffy radiator, you and I went out under the clear skies and scraped the snow aside to look for snowdrops. If it were December, we laughed at frost and hunted for holly berries. And we always found what we hunted for. We had a flower to show for every hour we spent together. And to-day we were going tramping for autumn leaves and wild asters. Oh, Billy!"

He rammed his hands fiercely into his pockets, as if to put them out of the way of temptation.

"Why all these past tenses?" he de-

manded irritably. "Why 'were' going? Who's dead?" hotly.

"But you asked me to marry you. And I refused," was her dismal résumé.

"Well, that hasn't amputated the feet of either of us," he explained grimly.

He got his hat, opened the door, and waited for her to precede him.

The light sparked back into her clouded face as she joyously took the suggestion, and

wandered streetward with him. She made a complete recovery while walking jauntily by his side, all unardent and unamiable though the side was.

"Billy, you brave and lovable thing, you, you are trying to show me that things are just the same as they were before. And so they are. What you—you asked me—won't make the slightest difference between us."

"Not the slightest," concurring elaborately; adding gloomily: "So it seems."

"And we'll spend the day as we planned—take a car ride into the country and gather autumn flowers. I love October."

"All right. And after you are tired gathering flowers, we'll sit down by the roadside, and I'll ask you again to marry me, and you can go all over the reasons again why you can't."

"Billy, will that be wise?" she pleaded.

"Well," he pondered thoughtfully, "it is hard to decide upon what is wisdom and what is not, for a girl who calls her rejected suitor by his first name."

"Then you'd like me to call you Mr. Dillingham?"

"It's really not a question of what I'd like," he explained, trying successfully to be unpleasent. "It's a question of your own endurance—which wouldn't last. No one, not even strong people, can call me Mr. Dillingham for very long, even though they know they'd better. Lots of people make up their minds to do it, as a matter of precaution, to keep me from spreading and losing form, just as they make up their minds to keep their new umbrella in that silk stocking thing it is bought in; but they can't stand the strain of eternally pulling it off and on. Same with Dillingham. It's a name too long and sleasy for daily use."

"All right—Billy."

By now they were standing on a corner awaiting their suburban trolley car.

"All right—Miss Earle."

Her lashes caught and tangled as she threw him a sidewise, indignant glance, making it a particularly poignant affair.

"Yours is short," he explained. "Your name."

She stamped her foot suddenly.

"You are not a bit the same!"

"But *you* are," he acknowledged. "More than ever the same; which makes it about even."

Here he politely helped her into their car. After they had proceeded for a while on their way, they made out that the greater number of their fellow passengers were solemn-faced householders of both sexes, who, basket-laden and care-heavy, were journeying to the suburban market in order to make thrifty purchases for the week.

"Take a good look at these people," whispered Josephine, at length, after she had made a melancholy study of them.

"I have done so," he replied stiffly, knowing what was the moral to be wrung from their down-hearted ensemble.

"They are *married* people," quavered Josephine, truly wretched about it.

"Think so?" fidgeting.

"Know so. See how depressed they are."

"Marketing is not a pronouncedly merryfeat."

"It is!" she contradicted vehemently. "You and I have marketed whole lots for club picnics and things, and we have always had more fun over it than a nest of kittens. It is not marketing but marriage that has bowled over these poor souls."

"Maybe they'll feel livelier after they have provisioned up," he projected hopefully.

"If so, we'll notice it," mused Josephine, "for we're coming back this way."

"I say, Josephine," he interrupted, craning his neck to look from the window. "There's a jolly field full of asters. Let's get out next stop."

Which they did, alighting upon the friendliest kind of a country road, velvety, to be sure, with much dust, but aromatic with the pungent fragrance of drying herbs and ferns, and musky with the breath of hidden wild grapes, gay on either hand with fields of asters and goldenrod, and vivid along its whole flaming length with reddening maples. They strolled along it, talking.

"This has been pretty nice, hasn't it?" asked Josephine at last, with a grateful sigh. "So gabby and pleasant. So much nicer than being grumped up side by side, surly and married—with a market basket at our feet, and never a word to throw at each other."

"Here's the place to get our flowers to take back with us," he said affably, scorning to listen.

He helped her into the field, and they set to work gathering flowers.

"No goldenrod, Billy," she prohibited. "I hate the stiff stuff."

"Why?"

He looked at it rather regretfully, for it lazily appealed to him, every stalk being a bouquet in itself. Ten sweeps of a jackknife, and a man might call his labors done.

"Because it makes me think of how

dead summer is. I want only asters, reminding me of spring—same color as violets." She was picking assiduously.

"Some violets are yellow," he announced, with scientific firmness—and crankiness.

"Billy," severely, as she tugged at a stem, "only a bad-dispositioned man would think of yellow when violets were mentioned."

"Or a wide-knowledged man. That's the kind of a man, though, that a girl *always* thinks is bad-dispositioned. However, call the golden-rod affair closed. I'll pick asters."

But, instead of immediately doing it, he folded his arms gloomily, and recited:

"Ah, hadst thou liked me less and loved me more
Through all those summer days of joy and rain,
I had not now been sorrow's heiror,
Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain."

She straightened up reprovingly, and stared him down.

"This is a silly trick of yours, Billy, this poetizing."

"Rhymes and sighs are lovers' messengers."

"Humph! I'd warn any girl against a lover glib enough to come to her with poetry on the tip of his tongue."

"That's what the tongue's tip's for—and pills."

Poetry from a lover means less than nothing. It never outlasts courtship. And it ought. Poetry from one's husband, now, *would* mean something."

"It certainly *would*," he agreed, shocked. "Would mean that he'd been brushing up on it to quote it to some one else."

He took her frown unwinkingly; then, when she turned away from him and resumed her flower gathering, he tractably did the same. After excessive labor by them both, he called peacefully:

"Josephine."

She looked at him over her flowers, as over a hedge of amethyst.

He held up his own bunch.

"Let's call this enough."

Going to her, he laid his purple sheaf in her arms, quoting in a hushed way:

"Every aster in my hand
Goes home laden with a thought."

She glanced down with Madonnalike sweetness at the profusion of blossoms, asking pointedly:

"Can your mentality afford to part with so many?"

"It's the same thought," he explained. "Just over and over."

She sat down to arrange the flowers, and he threw himself beside her, playing with the blooms in her lap. Presently, not seeing them at all, he began to dot them picturesquely all down her dress—a flower for each question, as he asked it, the banter quite gone from his voice:

"Josephine, I've loved you now for three years, haven't I?"

The silence gave her no rest till she murmured plaintively:

"Yes."

He dotted this with a flower.

"In that time you have grown to love me, haven't you?"

"Have I?"

She tried to laugh.

He refused absolutely to accept this parry, and played carefully with the next flower. Again the silence forced her.

"Yes," she whispered.

He methodically dotted this, too; and asked on:

"You knew I'd propose to you, if you let me come to it, didn't you?"

"Yes."

She stirred in protest. Down went his purple dot.

"And you let me come to it, didn't you?"

"Yes."

He carefully selected a big aster to dot this.

"And then said you couldn't marry me because you wanted to keep friends with me?"

"Yes."

He artistically added the last dot, dusted his hands, folded them under his head, and stretched peacefully out, his eyes on the sky.

She took up the big aster, and looked long at it.

"Well?" she asked nervously, after a full five minutes.

"Oh, I'm done," he replied, in a faintly surprised tone, as if he had detached himself so utterly from the conversation that he recalled it but dimly.

She accepted the responsibility he put upon her.

"You accuse me—and I know what of. But you are not exactly right about it, Billy. My treatment of you was not heartlessness, it was a heartfelt, almost heartbroken desire to keep you for as long as I could; for I've studied into marriage a horrible lot, Billy; and I always see it the same way—as a gallows upon which dear little winged Love gets hanged, his bright face wan and dead, his song quite mute. Billy, *won't* you please keep friends with me, dear, without? See what a nice day we've had, unmarried!"

"Haven't we just?" he assented, with biting enthusiasm, sitting up from the grass in order to view her more thoroughly.

She softly kissed the aster, and it seemed to strike him very unfavorably.

"I know why you like the abominable things," he said darkly. "It's because there is nothing gentle and sweet about you, nor about them; you are only spicy and pretty, as they are; you have no soul, as they have no perfume."

"Which shows what you know about asters," she cried, defending them indignantly. "Wild, in a field, like this, their sweetness gets scattered; but if you wear an aster on your breast, or carry it home with you, you will find out how sweet and fragrant it can grow!"

"That's encouraging," he said meaningly. "I'll try it. Oh, Josephine, I won't worry you with continued askings, and I won't ungenerously force you to say 'yes' in words; but give me that flower, dear, the one you have kissed. Put it in my hand as a promise that you will trust me, that you will try the dearer, closer life with me."

The light in his face seemed to decide her against him.

"I will not do it!" she cried passionately. Adding half to herself: "And never see that lovely look again."

"Oh, we might as well go back to the city," he said. "Give me this stack of hay to tote for you, and we'll catch the next car."

The walk back to the track was severely wordless, Josephine looking much at the single flower she held.

As the car whirred toward them from a distance, she broke the silence.



The rooster vied with the baby in wanting to look out of the window.

"Mr. Dillingham," she said hurriedly, "if those married marketers come back cheerful, I'll—I'll try it."

"Josephine!" he groaned.

He had no time for further speech, as the car was upon them. They boarded it—their car of doom.

Never were fellow travelers scanned more carefully. After her prolonged survey of them, Josephine, seeing the wastefulness of speech, settled herself back against the seat, and looked comfortably forward to the unwedded state.

Dillingham quite glared a while at his car mates, scoring things very heavily up against them.

The showing they made was certainly a blow to matrimony. The marketers, dispirited enough on the way out, were positively morose on the return journey, and they seemed to loathe not only themselves and each other, but the very provisions they had purchased, for they occasionally prodded the stuff, and sighed over it. Cast off and repudiated aromas of coffee, onions, and cheese seemed to wander lonesomely up and down the aisle. Babies, smearing mashed cookies over their faces, writhed and wailed—about four and a half of them to each mother. The fathers, who had been impounded for bundle carriers, had given up every last shred of hope, too desperately inert even to scold their offspring. A wild-eyed woman had her infant on one knee and a live rooster on the other; and the rooster vied with the baby in wanting to look out of the window and in being distrustful of the conductor.

But the pair which longest held Josephine's commiserating eye sat directly opposite.

"Billy," she whispered, when she could stand it no longer—and there was a shine of tears in her lashes, "aren't they sad and awful? I mean the man with the box of eggs, whose wife holds the bunch of celery so that it tickles his nose. They are young, both of them, maybe younger than we; but they have forgotten how to laugh, and how to be happy in each other. They aren't so poor, either, from the look of their clothes. They ought to be chatting away as we do; and, as it is, perfect strangers could not seem more oblivious than they."

"He doesn't like the celery so near his nose; and small blame to him. *I'd* throw the eggs at her."

Josephine's eyes seemed riveted to the

fatal sight. The couple fairly spoiled her ride for her.

"Why, I'd give *money*, Billy," she said, "if he would only chat a bit to her. Poor, tired girl wife!"

But presently something happened for which Josephine had not been prepared. A station stop was called, and the young celery carrier removed her passive weight from the shoulder of the egg carrier, took her leaves from under his nose, produced a hidden hamper from the folds of her skirt, and alighted from the car, leaving the grateful egg man to puff himself out over the vacant space. Josephine gasped and started.

"Nice *cad* he'd have been to chat," gleed Dillingham.

"Billy, don't snort and cavil in a crowld."

"They acted like strangers," he went on, uncrushed, "because they *were* strangers. They weren't married the least bit. How do you know that any of these people are married? *I* say they're not. *I* say they're dumpy and hateful just because their wives, and husbands, and things aren't with them. Give me that aster!"

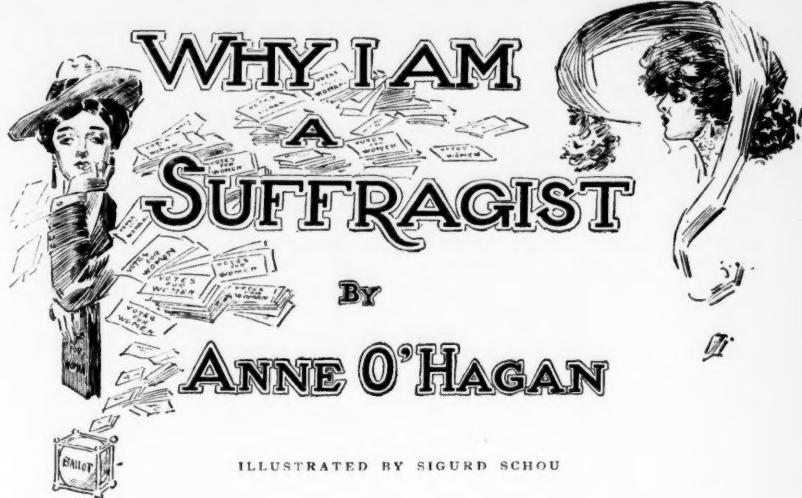
Paying involuntary obedience to his commanding tones and gesture rather than to his words in themselves, she gave him the flower in quick bewilderment. Then, spiritually sensing the flags of triumph which his exultant soul hung out at the lifting of the three years' siege, she remembered what the flower was to stand for, and vainly flung out her hand to get it back.

"Billy, oh, Billy!" she stammered. "I didn't stop to think!"

"Of course you didn't," he agreed. "Which accounts for your doing the one sensible action of your life."

And, fearing nothing from the lack-luster eyes around him, he kissed the aster before placing it in his button-hole, where he fastened it very securely with a pin.





ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

THE first time this question was ever put to me, I remember that I was a little dazed with astonishment. "Why do you want to vote?" some one asked me, in an indulgent, amused tone.

It was when I was a young person, incapable of understanding the temperament which did not thrill to noble words, particularly to the noble word, "liberty." I could not comprehend that there were in the world, even in the world of America, excellent, law-abiding citizens, who regarded that word as an outworn shibboleth, and the idea it represented as something which was quite useful once upon a time in establishing conditions in which their own or their ancestors' opportunities were made equal to their own or their ancestors' gifts, but something which might now be put away in the storeroom with other antique furniture, which had been quite desirable and handsome once—with whale-oil lamps, and warming pans, and spinning wheels.

At the period to which I refer, to ask me why I wished to vote—why I wished to exercise the highest right of freedom in a country established upon the prin-

ciples of liberty—seemed to me like asking me why I wished to breathe. To breathe was the instinctive act, the first necessity of my physical life. If any one had said to me: "Why do you wish to breathe? See what delicious viands are spread before you—you may eat as much as you please! See what charming attire is laid out for you—you may dress as ornately as you wish! Why bother about breathing?" I should have thought him a lunatic, harmless only because powerless to enforce his strange theory of existence.

And so those persons who asked me why I wished to exercise the first, the one essential, act of political existence in a country founded upon the doctrine of political equality, seemed to me preposterous and absurd.

But that time has passed. I know now that in the world, even in the world of America, are many persons who do not believe in individual liberty under the law, who do not believe in political equality, who do not believe in democracy. There are many more who do not realize that to deny the privilege of voting to women is to declare themselves no believers in democracy.

And for all such it is not enough for the woman who wishes to vote, who thinks that, of course, she should be allowed to vote, to reply: "Am I not living under a constitution which guarantees me equal rights before the law? Am I not, then, deceived, bungoed, flimflammed—any vulgar word that one pleases to use to express the vulgar fact—when I am denied the right to any voice in making the laws under which I live, or in choosing the administrators of those laws?"

Why, then—apart from the fact that I believe in freedom—am I a suffragist? Why do some women want to vote?

In the first place, some women are true democrats, true believers in the theory that, whatever the faults of democracy, those faults are fewer, the injustices under it less harmful, than the faults and injustices under any other system of government yet tried out

upon the earth. Some women believe profoundly—basing their belief upon a knowledge of history—that no class lower than the archangels can be trusted to legislate justly for any other class; the archangels might be able to do it, but even that is doubtful. It would take an archangel of uncommonly strong nature to resist the temptation to legislate a little in favor of the archangelical class, and a little—just a little, and doubtless "for their own good"—against the mere rank and file of the heavenly hosts.

I once knew a very worthy man who employed in his tobacco works a good many negroes. He was in the habit of declaiming eloquently and with utter sincerity against the law which prevented him from working them more than a certain number of hours a week, thereby giving them a few hours' holiday on Saturdays.

"It's for their own good I'd keep them at work," he protested earnestly. "What do they do with a holiday? A lot of them get drunk! Wouldn't it be better for them to be working?"

He was a very good man, even a kind man in his personal relations; but I should have hated to be one of his workers had he had the control of legislation affecting me as well as himself.

No—no class has ever, in the history of the world, proved itself equal to legislating justly—continuously justly—for any other class. And man legislating as a class for woman as a class has been no exception to the universal rule. It is, perhaps, true that the laws discriminating against women are, in part, the survival of the law of the feudal period, and that they are gradually being made better.

Still, many laws concerning the relations of men with one another must have been also survivals of the feudal period;



Men, making and interpreting laws, were over a hundred and fifty years in deriving that the word "youth" might include girls as well as boys.

and since the advent of the democratic era there has been no such delay in modifying them as in modifying the laws discriminating against women as a class.

Men, making and interpreting laws for women as well as for themselves, were over a hundred and fifty years in deciding that the word "youth" might include girls as well as boys, and the free-school system of the country might be as widely utilized by girls as by boys. It took a period much longer for the beginning of the doctrine of equal pay for equal work to be even lisped.

Men, making and interpreting laws for women as well as for themselves, were an astonishingly long time in reaching the doctrine that a woman's property is ever so remotely her own. It was less than twenty years ago—in 1894—that a sheriff waited at the church door of a certain town in Kentucky for the conclusion of a marriage ceremony; that ceremony would make the woman's property the man's without any further ado about it—any fuss and feathers with deeds and signatures—and the sheriff, having a judgment for debt against the man, waited in order to be able to seize at once the most readily available piece of the bride's property. It happened to be the bridal coach and horses.

Men, legislating for women as well as for themselves, have not at all universally decided that a mother's guardianship rights in her children are equal to a father's. In not all the States are the rights of parents equal yet; and it was not until 1893 that the law in New York State recognized the mother's rights in her children as equal to the father's.

Men, legislating for women as well as for themselves, were responsible for the unspeakable statutes declaring the age at which girls might be considered as responsible for their own ruin. In twenty-nine of the States, this age was originally ten years, and amendment has been laboriously slow and inadequate throughout.

Men, in short, legislating as a class for women as a class, have done exactly

what every ruling class has always done throughout the history of the world—they have discriminated against the class which had no legal voice. That is the condition that democracy aims to correct; and democratic governments are founded as much upon the long roll call of the failures, on the part of aristocracies, oligarchies, and monarchies, to deal justly with the classes not represented in their governments as upon the glorious words about liberty, equality, and fraternity, to which the ardent hearts of the world were thrilling at the time the Declaration of Independence was written.

"But," said a very intelligent and charming young woman to me, when I had been declaring this doctrine that no one class has ever been able to legislate justly for another class, not even men for women, "but you can't really be so keen about the suffrage movement just on that account! However slow men were to correct laws discriminating against women—survivals from the common law of the feudal days—those have been remedied now, for the most part. You were able to get as good an education as your brother, and no one objected at all. You were able to pursue a career; you are able to own property. Why waste time over suffrage when there are so many more interesting things in the world?"

I hate to say that I was reminded of our farm, and of the utter satisfaction of our black Berkshire pigs with the contents of their trough; their unquestioning spirit in regard to it. It is an attitude commendable in black Berkshires who are headed toward the butcher's as their goal. And it is true that, thanks to the labors of the early woman-suffrage agitators, many laws and customs which bore hardly upon women have been so modified that, perhaps, the average woman reading these lines has never been aware of any very troublesome restriction upon her freedom.

Nevertheless, there is the record; there was the long-borne injustice, the long fight for a decent amount of freedom and of opportunity—an amount



When election day came around, Si stopped through his morning chores, and hied him to the village.

which no woman, not even the most confirmed and devout of the anti-suffragists, would dream of declaring too great. Is it very illogical to assume that, as new conditions arise, men will experience the same old difficulty—the world-old difficulty—in legislating as justly for an unrepresented class as for themselves? And new conditions will arise; though we may all be very comfortable to-day, there is little warrant for assuming that the world is going to stand still.

But it is not merely because I am a democrat and have a profound and somewhat fiery feeling about democracy that I am a believer in woman suffrage. Suppose that the abstract ideals of government interested me less than the styles of ten years ago; suppose that I had never heard of liberty, and, more important still, had never felt the glow of it, the love of it, in my heart—why should any one suppose that I am not

which he took part? Why should not her interest be a much broader, a much more living emotion than that of a scholarly curator of a museum? How it is possible for a woman of active mind, whose masculine forbears had any part in establishing or in maintaining these United States, not to feel some interest in politics, passes the comprehension of one suffragist.

As for those women whose immediate ancestors came to this country to find liberty, opportunity, equal rights for all, for them not to be interested in politics is even stranger to that same suffragist's mind. Whether her people have been here for two hundred and fifty years, or for ten, what dearer family traditions can a woman have to cherish than those which have their beginning and their meaning in the word "politics"?

If my father had founded a little library in his native town, that library

interested in politics? I am interested in politics. I am interested in politicians, in measures, in assemblies, in party management, in party oratory, even.

Why is it forever assumed that a woman inherits all her tastes and interests from her mother—from her mothers back to the dawn of time—and none from her fathers? She inherits his nose, his eyes, his laugh, his energy, or his indolence, his orderly habits, his dyspeptic tendency. Why should there be no strain of him in her interests, her tastes, her abilities?

Suppose that her father fought to save the Union? Is it natural to expect that she will take no interest—no deep, vital interest—in the affairs of that Union to-day? Or should her expression of interest be rigidly confined to taking care of his sword and sash, and instructing his grandchildren in the names and dates of the battles in

would be a source of family pride to me. I should always be wanting to make gifts to it, to keep its building in repair, to make it increasingly useful to its readers. I should hope to be on its board of directors. I should be terribly concerned about the action of the new vacuum cleaner upon book bindings. I should develop opinions upon the sort of books which ought to go in the children's department and the sort which ought to be kept for library use only. And when I came to die, I should probably leave part of my small fortune, if I had any at all, to it.

My father never endowed or established a library; but, like the fathers of tens of thousands of other women, he fought through the Civil War. How can I help being interested in the management of the nation to which he gave so much of his strength and thought?

"Interested? Yes, perhaps," says the young woman who finds many more interesting things in the world than politics. "Yes, to be sure, if you happen to be built that way. But what effect upon your interest does the lack or the possession of the mere ballot have? Can't you be interested in the nation without voting?"

An interest in politics, my dear young friend, unaccompanied by a ballot, is almost as futile a thing as an overweening impulse toward benevolence unaccompanied by a cent. One can be charitable though penniless, I dare say; but charity without a little money is a long, laborious, disheartening process.

One can, perhaps, take an intelligent interest in candidates and in measures when one has no vote; but to render the voiceless interest in the slightest degree influential is a labor of Hercules—and, at that, a labor which maddens one with the sense of its unnecessary injustice. I may think until I am black in the face about the good of the country. I may talk about it until my acquaintances flee when they see me coming. I may work and pray—and when I am quite through, the janitor of the apartment house in which I dwell, who has taken not the slightest interest in the matter, but who has received certain

instructions from the saloon keeper at the corner, is able to do more for or against the good of the country than I.

I am perfectly willing that he should be able to do as much as I. But it does enrage me that he should be able, with his deep-rooted, sodden indifference to every public question, to do more!

I may make as gallantly ready for any political fray as the doughtiest warrior that ever lived. I may inform myself about conditions, about men and measures, about precedents and experiences until I am simply bristling with information; but at the crucial moment, when I, in the very fittest of political conditions, am all ready to step into the political arena—behold, the effective weapon is taken from me!

It is, I assure you, a trial to a woman who is really interested in politics. It is as much of a trial as it would be to a woman with a taste for piano music never to be allowed to touch any instrument but a practice clavier. However perfect her technique might become with the aid of that comparatively noiseless keyboard, it would be both a torment and a folly for her to limit her musical activities to it.

But I am willing, for the sake of argument, to admit that there is a large race of women—women worthy and intelligent—to whom neither the abstractions of the idea of governmental liberty nor the practicalities of politics make the slightest appeal. There are, one may recall in passing, many men of the same class; but they are not disfranchised, nor is their existence an argument in favor of the disfranchisement of other men.

But even were I one of these, one of the women who wouldn't stop to listen to a campaign orator on the end of a cart, who wouldn't read a report from Albany or from Washington as long as there was a society note or an advertisement in the paper—even were I such a woman, I should still be a suffragist.

I am a taxpayer. I think I never felt a stronger wave of suffrage sentiment engulf me than I did a few years ago when it was first brought home to me what it meant to be a taxpayer.

The property on which I pay taxes is a modest New England farm. It came to me, unlike some other of my scanty possessions, by purchase, and not by gift or inheritance. I had spent money which I had myself earned in "bringing it up." It was run down as only an old, neglected New England farm knows how to be. To a certain extent, I was, therefore, a benefactor to the community. I had arrested the deterioration of a piece of property, and had, to that degree, increased the value of all the property in the neighborhood. I was as keenly interested in the community as only a perfectly new landowner can be.

A New England farm requires a "hired man." A hired man was one of the features of my entirely orthodox farm. He was a native of the region, sprung of good enough stock, starting life with some small holdings of his own. Through the twin vices of drunkenness and utter idleness—"a painted ship upon a painted ocean" could give him no points in regard to idleness—he had lost what he originally had. He had no stake in the community. In so far as he stood for anything, he stood for the general deterioration of the place.

When election day came around, Si slopped through his morning chores and, donning his best clothes, hied him to the village. He was going to exercise the right of citizenship. He was going to vote. Among other things, he was going to vote against a measure of which I was strongly in favor—the "no-licensing" of the village. I had no opportunity to declare my conviction that a saloon in a little country town is one of the worst possible influences—infinitely worse than a saloon in a big city, where there are hundreds of sights and sounds, hundreds of "shows" of all kinds to compete with it. But Si had a full chance to declare that he believed in the license policy.

Now, I shouldn't have minded if Si and his mates had beaten me and my mates in a fair fight. I don't want to insist that my views shall prevail in any community. I don't expect that "because I am virtuous, there shall be no

more cakes and ale." But I want my view counted. Then if there are more Si-es than there are my sort, all right. So be it.

In this case, of course, there would not have been. I was not the only woman taxpayer who sat at home and minded her knitting that day, while her non-tax-paying hired man went to the polls and voted—not only that he might have a place of spirituous refreshment when he went to the village, but what improvements should be undertaken with the tax moneys, and who should administer them.

If I had never been a suffragist before, I should have become one that day, I think.

"How many women taxpayers are there in this country?" asks some one, with the air of clinching an anti-suffrage argument. "Aren't they a small class?"

They are not a small class, even if one defines tax-paying women to include only those women who pay taxes on real estate. They are not a small class if one defines it so as to mean even those women who pay taxes upon real estate which they have acquired through their own efforts.

But taxes cannot be limited in such a fashion. There is indirect, as well as direct, taxation. While the country taxes any imported articles which women use, women are taxed. If there is a tax upon tea and coffee, there is a tax upon the women who buy those comestibles. If there is a tax upon woollen goods, there is a tax upon women who wear wool—even if they wear home-grown, home-manufactured wool; for the American woollen merchants are not engaged in an eleemosynary undertaking; they are not giving away their goods a penny cheaper than are the foreign woollen-goods makers.

If Tweed and Frieze, of Scotland, are obliged to ask forty dollars for their ulsters in the United States of America in order to cover the cost of the production of those ulsters, plus the cost of transportation, plus the duty, plus the necessary profit, you may be quite sure that Messrs. Melton and Serge, of

Massachusetts and Rhode Island, are not going to charge much less than thirty-nine dollars and a half for their ulsters, no matter how much less the cost of production. And so the woman who is rheumatic enough or vain enough to buy any ulster at all, is a woman taxed by the laws of her land.

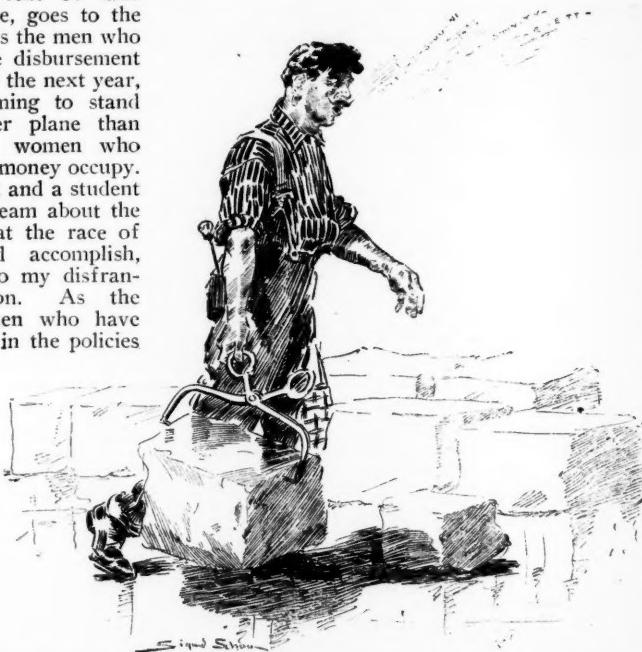
Now, far be it from any mere woman suffragist to declare these taxes unjust. All that she declares unjust is that fact that, having paid them, she is not allowed to say a word about how they shall be spent—whether on a few Dreadnaughts, ultimately to kill her sons, or on the preservation of the country's forests, or the establishment of commissions to investigate and correct the adulteration of food.

So that when I, a picayune taxpayer in a New England village, object to sitting at home while my hired man, who never paid a cent of land taxes in his life, goes to the village and elects the men who are to have the disbursement of my taxes for the next year, I am not claiming to stand upon any other plane than that which all women who earn and spend money occupy.

As an idealist and a student who used to dream about the great things that the race of freemen would accomplish, then I object to my disfranchised condition. As the daughter of men who have been interested in the policies and the politics of their country, and who herself feels the same unconquerable stirrings of interest, I object to my disfranchisement. As a tax-paying woman I object. But grant, for the

sake of argument, that I were none of these things. Still I should have grounds of objection, still grounds for earnest work to overcome my disabilities and gain the ballot.

I am a housekeeper—even the antis will allow that that is a perfectly proper thing for me to be. I live—to be quite intimate—during the winter in an old-fashioned apartment house. I am quite sure that the tenement-house law of the City of New York is not infrequently violated by the owner of that apartment house in the matter of lighting the halls. As guests almost break their distinguished necks in rounding the corner of the stairs to the hall on which my apartment is situated; as I myself, familiar though I am with the turns of the stairs, make missteps, and go plunging through the hems of my best skirts; can any one imagine that I am so stupid as not to



My iceman, to whom English is still an unknown tongue, is allowed to say for what the public moneys shall be spent, and who shall spend them.

wish I had a voice in the framing of tenement-house laws and in the choice of tenement-house commissioners.

I am aware, dear anti-suffragist, that the tenement-house commissioner of New York is appointed by the mayor, and is not directly elected by the ballots of the voters; but I am also aware that I have no part in electing that mayor, and have no political claim upon his consideration when I wish to complain of the action, or the lack of action, of his appointee.

I am a housekeeper. I am vitally interested in the matter of pure food. It rejoices my soul when I read a sullen, hard-won label, remarking: "The contents of this bottle are artificially colored." It would rejoice my soul a thousandfold more could I know that every bottle containing an artificial coloring matter, or a chemical preservative, was as plainly labeled. It would rejoice my soul exceedingly could I have a voice in appointing the men who inspect the foodstuffs, the weights and measures, the cold-storage plants, and all the institutions in which I, as a housekeeper, am vitally and—even if I were an anti-suffragist—legitimately interested.

I am a housekeeper, eager to have my family's surroundings as healthful and pleasant as may be. What part have I had in framing the tenement-house laws of the City of New York, the building laws of the city? What part have I had in determining the building code? Homemaking is not an art which has its beginning and end in the selection of wall papers and the thrifty and nutritious cooking of inexpensive meats. You cannot have a safe, secluded home under building laws which allow paper-thin partitions between you and your neighbors. You cannot have safe, comfortable homes in fire traps. You cannot have healthy homes unless you have an adequate allowance of light and air space.

Of course, you may tell me that men are as vitally interested in the building code and the choice of building inspectors as are women. They are, that is true—but they do not seem to realize it. Generations of regarding the fran-

chise as a right exercised for large, vague, far-away reasons—tariffs, and the maintenance of a gold standard, and the building of armories, and the national triumph of the Republican or the Democratic party—have clouded them to the close, personal, homely reasons for its exercise.

But women, whose duties are, for the most part, within the four walls of their dwellings, bring another point of view to bear upon the situation. They are less interested in whether the election of X will strengthen "the party" in 1916 than they are in the question of whether his election will insure clean streets until 1916. And I don't think that even the besotted adherent of either of the parties will claim that that is a less important consideration than the other.

Like every other woman whose leisure is sometimes an hour a week above the demands upon her time, and whose income is occasionally a dollar or two in advance of the need of spending it, I am in a small way a philanthropist. I want the women who work in factories to have at least sanitary surroundings. I want them to have, so far as the necessities of modern industry permit it, decent hours. What voice have I in framing the factory code? What voice have I in naming the factory inspectors of the State? And when, banded together with numerous other excellent women who desire to "influence" legislation, we make appeal to the legislators in behalf of this and that good cause, are we heard with the respect which would be accorded a band of voters representing as large a constituency of voters as we excellent women represent of non-voters? Most emphatically—and most naturally—we are not.

Modern legislation—modern municipal legislation, at any rate—is concerned with the very things in which women are more instructed than men; in which, from the circumstances of their lives, they are more deeply interested than men. Modern municipal legislation is domestic. It concerns the cleaning of the streets, the building of dwelling places, the whole question of school maintenance. Modern municipal legis-

lation is house-keeping, and to deny the house keeping sex any part in it is to act with a really magnificent inconsistency.

The reply of the anti-suffragists to this contention is, when they are moderately logical and coherent, that all these interests are those of the family, not those of the women of the family exclusively, and that every family is represented on the voting lists. This is a mistake. The unit of representation under our form of government has never been the family. Families deprived of male representation over the voting age have gone unrepresented; families of ten or a dozen males over the voting age have had ten or a dozen voters.

A widow with ten daughters and tens of thousands of dollars' worth of taxable property is not a voter. A lad of twenty-one, without ownership in anything, even the clothes upon his back, is a voter, although his family may be already supplied with an adequate number of representatives—if representation at the polls were on the basis of the family. But it is not, and it never has been. It is safe to say that the family will never be represented at the polls until women are enfranchised.

If a woman is a stockholder in any corporation, she is entitled to vote upon the policy and the officering of that corporation. If she has the majority of the stock, she has the deciding vote. It



I should rather trust the whole problem to Fiametta.

is a matter of simple business honesty—the controlling interest has the deciding voice in questions of management and directorship. It is assumed that a woman having a large stake in a financial enterprise has intelligence enough to have an influential part in running the enterprise. And finance is not an easy matter for the lay mind to grasp.

But the woman who has just attended a meeting of the stockholders of her company, and has voted on questions of importance with what sense Heaven has given her, may leave the meeting, and have the happy consciousness that the elevator boy who whirls her down the twenty-two flights; the porter who swings the revolving door for her; the footman who opens the door of her limousine for her, and the chauffeur who guides her car home, are all in a position to make her recent voting a farce. Every one of them will be able to vote if any question of the control of

corporations arises, although he has not a cent's worth of stake in any corporation that exists. And the woman stockholder may once more stay at home and mind her knitting while her affairs are decided, without any expression of opinion on her part.

Says the anti-suffragist flatteringly to me at this point: "But, my good woman, you talk as if you would be the only one to vote—you and women like you; women really interested in the theories of government, in public policies, in education, and reform, and the like. But don't you realize that to give women the vote would enfranchise all women, not merely the fit and the educated?"

The answer to my dear anti-suffragist is obvious. She and I are not disfranchised because we are stupid, or because we are uneducated, or because we have no property stake in the country. We are disfranchised because we are women. That is the actual condition which confronts us apart from all theory of intellectual fitness.

As for the rest, I have already stated that I firmly believe no one class is capable of legislating justly for another. Badly and blindly as men legislate for themselves, they do not make such brutal mistakes as when they legislate for others. So little do I believe that any class can legislate justly for an unrepresented class, that I am constrained to confess I don't believe women could legislate just for men, were men suddenly disfranchised. I don't believe that the lady stockholder, and the gifted anti-suffragist, and I, were we and our kind unexpectedly and exclusively admitted to the privilege of voting, could legislate justly for my landlady with her thousands of excellent reasons for keeping her hallways as dark as Erebus, for our cooks, for the women who want to abolish the saloon, and the women who want to put the street railways under State control, and the women who want to revive the curfew laws, and the women who wish to make cigarette smoking by other women a felony.

It is only because I am a woman that I am disfranchised—not because I am

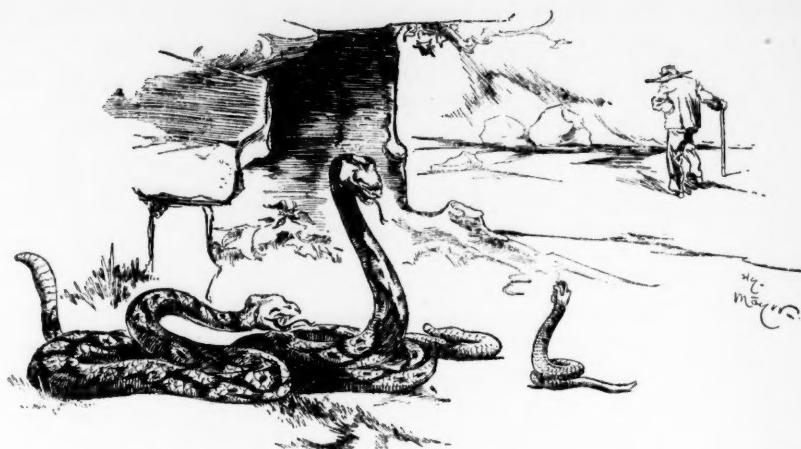
a dull person, though I may be; or an uneducated person, though I may be; or next door to a pauper, though I may be. It is merely because I am a woman.

And it is because he does not labor under that horrid disadvantage that Tony, my iceman, to whom English is still an unknown tongue, who keeps his money in an old ticking bag, and who intends to return to Italy by and by, when he has accumulated enough to buy the little vineyard outside Fiesole, is allowed to say for what the public moneys shall be spent, and who shall spend them; is allowed to say whether the streets shall be safe places for young working girls to walk or whether the police shall make a league with vice; is allowed to say whether there shall be playgrounds for the children in crowded quarters or whether "the gang" shall reign, terrorizing the neighborhood, and eventually filling the prisons.

Tony doesn't know that he is voting about all these things; but I have a strong idea that Fiametta, his wife, who holds her baby with such fierce, protecting arms, would soon learn all about it. And—pray do not be shocked, my dear anti-suffragist—I should rather trust the whole problem to Fiametta, if any class has to be excluded from the right to vote, than to Tony.

Those dreaded women of the "uneducated" classes, terror of all respectable antis, are the most passionately devoted mothers the world sees to-day; they could not be forever deceived on questions touching their children's rights and welfare. They are the most careful, the most pitifully careful managers in the world. They have to be! They could not be forever deceived as to the relation between uncleansed streets and the epidemics which sweep their neighborhoods, or as to the trueness of the scales and weights in which their food is measured for them.

No; if there must be a disfranchised class, I should rather it were the Tonys than the Fiamettas. I should even rather it were the good suffragists, like myself, than the Fiamettas. And that is how much I dread the ignorant vote, my dear anti!



The First Lesson

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY HY. MAYER

UNDER the rocks lived a rattlesnake family;
Fairly wrapped up in each other they were.
Looping and loving they snuggled quite clammily,
Dear Father Snake and the Baby and Her.
Oh, how they shook their night rattles for Babykins,
Hissed him to sleep, and adored him, in sooth!
Oh, how they wriggled with rapture and wiggled
When wee Baby Rattlesnake cut his first tooth!

Down by the rocks strolled a veteran cattleman;
Stiff was his leg, but his heart was all right.
Mother Snake hissed: "Pa, be still with your rattle, man!
Here's where our darling can learn how to bite."
Down on a rock sat the veteran dolefully,
Stretched out his leg, quite conveniently near.
"Wee Wiggly-Jiggly," said Father Snake soulfully,
"Come, take your cute little lesson, my dear!"

"Coil on your tail like a bedspring," said Mother Snake,

"Throw out your cute little fang—that's my bird!
Measure your distance—so—just like another snake.

Strike at his shin when I give you the word."

Sweet was the picture! The little one willingly

Poised for his work, though too tiny by half,
Showing his fangles, both sharply and thrillingly,

Less than an inch from the veteran's calf.

"Go!" said the father; and Babykins blissfully

Struck at the leg with an infantile fang.

Barren result! For the veteran blissfully

Chewed his tobacco, and gave not a hang.

"Bite him again!" cried the mother, now furious.

Thrice struck the infant with hard, hollow sound.

Only the veteran, calm and uncurious,

Whistled "My Bluebell," and never looked round.

Then up jumped the Pa Snake, with irritability,

Struck at the limb just as hard as he could,

Sunk in his fangs with the greatest ability,

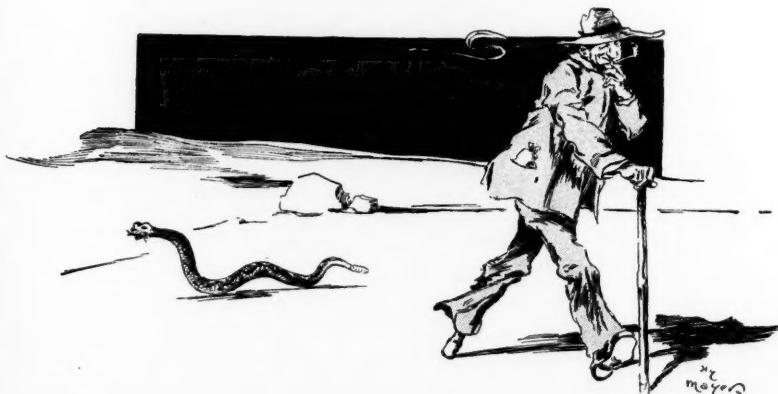
Bit off a piece—and behold! It was wood.

Off crawled the Snakes with profound unobtrusiveness.

"Babe," hissed the father, "learn this for your zeal:

Oft you will find in this world of illusiveness

Counterfeit virtues disguised as the real."





A SPECTRE FROM THE PAST

BY HILDEGARDE LAVENDER

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

IT was Ernestina who brought the tidings to the group on the piazza—Ernestina, long-limbed, flyaway, impetuous, and seventeen.

"Mother!" she cried, hurling herself into the midst of the assemblage of matrons and spinsters of years more setted than hers. "Mother! Guess who's coming!"

Mrs. Kimball looked at Ernestina with the indulgent, deprecating glance of mothers who see their offspring failing in decorum, yet love them, and make allowances for them, finding their lapses, on the whole, rather captivating. To look at Ernestina, she had to raise her eyes from the mending in her lap; her big darning bag hung from her chair. She also took off her glasses—it was only when she read or sewed that she wore them.

"My dear," she said, with gentle reproof, "have you seen Mrs. Cartwright before this morning?"

Mrs. Cartwright was the plump, pilowy old lady who sat in the rocking-chair next to Mrs. Kimball's, and who eyed Ernestina with strong antagonism.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Cartwright, how d'y do?" Ernestina repaired her shortcoming in courtesy with great speed. "But, mother, do guess who's coming!"

"I should say it must be the President of the United States from the excitement Ernestina seems to feel about it," said Mrs. Cartwright acidly. "Who is it, child?"

"The President of the United States? Pooh!" Ernestina tossed her head in a manner as unladylike and as unpatriotic as her words. "Of course not! What would he be doing coming to Porpoise Bay? You guess, mother," she added persuasively.

"My dear, how can I? It must be one of your great admirations; but how can I possibly tell which one? Ellen Terry, Maude Adams, that girl—what was her name?—who took that astonishingly long walk last year? Or the woman tennis champion? You know you have adorations by the hundred. I don't know which one is coming to Porpoise Bay."

"Not one of those," cried Ernestina triumphantly. "But what would you say to Miss Jocelyn Wright?"

"Miss Jocelyn Wright?" said Mrs. Cartwright impatiently. "Now, who in the name of common sense is Miss Jocelyn Wright? I never heard of her."

Mrs. Kimball said nothing. She looked at her daughter out of her loving blue eyes; but they wore a new expression now—bewilderment, pain.

"Oh, haven't you?" retorted Ernestina airily, impertinently to the older lady. "Well, you have, haven't you, mumsey?"

Mrs. Kimball opened her lips to answer, but found them dry. She bit them to moisten them, and then she answered, in her gentle, guarded way:

"Yes, I think I have heard of her.

But I did not know that you had. Why is it you are so excited over her coming?"

"Didn't know I had heard of her?" Ernestina was shrill. "Why, they just adore her at Woodley. She has English there; and the girls think she is perfectly grand. Every one who has gone there from our school in the last three years says she's a wonder. I'd want to go to Wellesley myself if it weren't for her—I'd love the rowing at Wellesley. But Katherine Anstruthers, and Bess Neilson, and all our crowd, say that there isn't another woman's college that can touch Woodley in having a teacher like Miss Wright. She's—a beauty, and she dresses like a duchess—a nice duchess, not a chorus-girl duchess."

"Ernestina!" interpolated Ernestina's mother, while Mrs. Cartwright muttered something about "the children of today."

"Well, there are chorus-girl duchesses, aren't there? I'm not to blame for them. And Miss Wright has loads of men in love with her."

"How did that choice bit of information come down to the preparatory schools?" inquired Mrs. Cartwright grimly. "Is the lady herself responsible for it?"

"Of course not! But, when men trail after a woman all the time, it means that they are in love with her, doesn't it? And Patty Emerson says that there are more automobiles at Woodley on Mondays—that's the holiday every week there; and I think it's contemptible, for how can a girl get in town to the matinées on Saturday? But, anyway, there are more automobiles at Woodley, with visitors for Miss Wright, than for the very most popular of the seniors."

"How old is this instructor of youth?" inquired the critic of present-day manners and customs acidly.

"That's one of the wonderful things about her!" declared Ernestina bubblingly. "She must be quite well along. She's been at Woodley five years, and before that she was ever and ever so long at Vassar, and before that she studied in Berlin, and Paris, and places

—before she took any faculty position at all, I mean. She gets all her clothes abroad now, Bess Neilson says. So she can't be very young—not on account of the clothes—you understand, mumsey. But she's as lovely as if she weren't a day over twenty-four. You should see the pictures of her that Bess, and Caroline, and Katherine have! I don't know exactly how old she is."

"She's thirty-nine," said Mrs. Kimball automatically.

Both her daughter and Mrs. Cartwright stared at her. She sat with her work fallen in her lap, her hands relaxed, her soft eyes fixed on the sea beyond the animated, curving beach behind which the hotel stood. She seemed to speak without being quite aware that she was speaking.

"You know her, then?" asked Mrs. Cartwright.

Mrs. Kimball started a trifle.

"I? No. I beg your pardon, I must have been thinking aloud. What did I say? Oh, that Miss Wright was thirty-nine? I should be more careful, shouldn't I? I am, of course, not at all sure it is the same Miss Wright of whom I used to hear in my girlhood."

"Jocelyn is too fancy a name to belong to a lot of Wrights," declared Mrs. Cartwright, who seemed to be inimical to Miss Wright.

Edna Kimball smiled.

"Oh, I'm not sure of that," she answered. "I've known families where a grandmother's name or a great-grandmother's has descended to a whole tribe of cousins, and second and third cousins. You can't infer anything very assured from mere names. This is probably a young cousin, or even a niece, of the Jocelyn Wright of whom I used to hear when I was a girl."

"There's Martha Gibson!" cried Ernestina. "I must fly off and tell her that Miss Wright is coming to Porpoise Bay."

"If I had had any daughters," said Mrs. Cartwright sourly, as she watched Ernestina's swift flight down the piazza steps and along the shining sands in pursuit of one of her young comrades, "which I am sincerely glad to say I

never had, I should certainly never have allowed them to go to college, and to fall under the influence of another woman than myself, to give her the enthusiasm and devotion which they should give me!"

"Young people have to be hero-worshippers, if they have any generous impulse in them at all," replied Mrs. Kimball, gathering her mending together. "And you wouldn't wish their capacity for adoration narrowed to just yourself. Besides, it's very difficult for a mother to be a heroine to her children."

She rose as she spoke. Mrs. Cartwright stared at her sharply.

"Going in? I thought you were settled for a long forenoon's darning?"

"I think I'll go in for a while. I have some letters to write."

"You're looking pale. Hope you haven't hurt your eyes using a needle out here in this bright glare of sunlight—you know I told you I thought it was the worst thing in the world for your eyes."

"Perhaps you were right," sighed Edna Kimball. "But I hate to sit indoors any more than I can help during the summer. However, I must go in now. If you hear any of my tribe inquiring for me, will you please say I've gone to my room to lie down—no, I mean to write letters?"

"I will, and I'll tell them to leave you alone for an hour, and not go piling in after you," declared the elder lady militantly.

"Thank you." Mrs. Kimball drew

the strings of her mending bag over her plump wrist, and walked into the hotel corridor.

"Jocelyn Wright!" she said to herself fiercely when she had reached her room and had locked the door. "Jocelyn Wright!"

She crossed the room after she had idly and unconsciously rearranged the



He had read her his stories.

toilet things upon her dressing table. There was a low rocker by the window, and she sank wearily into it. Beneath the awning that shaded the room from the midsummer glare she looked out. Her eyes, unseeing, caught glimpses of the sapphire blue of the northern sea; caught the gray-black outlines of bold headlands, the blaze of red and yellow from the piazza flower boxes of the Porpoise Bay cottages; caught the

crude, bright color of the awnings which protected them from the glare of the summer sun.

"I wish it would rain," said Mrs. Kimball dully. "I hate all this color. I wish it would rain. I wish I could go home."

Then again she said to herself the name that had changed the aspect of her day: "Jocelyn Wright!"

In a corner of the room, where the closet jutted out, there was a tiny desk of the cottage variety—rather unsteady upon its legs, very scanty in its accommodations. On top of it there were a silver-framed photograph of a middle-aged man, and a red-leather folding frame, with the pictures of three children in it. Mrs. Kimball, turning her unhappy gaze from the outdoor world to the indoor, saw these. She leaned forward in her rocker until she was able to reach them, and then she drew them into her lap. Her husband and her children—her world and the fullness thereof.

"Jocelyn Wright!" she said again, as she looked at them.

Then the tender expression in her blue eyes deepened. She smiled at the little group—at the kind, humorous, clear-cut face of the man, at the bright, eager faces of the two boys and the young girl.

"She can't take these away from me!" cried Edna Kimball, snatching up her children's photographs and kissing them.

"Ah, and she can't take you, either, dear, dearest!" she whispered.

Nevertheless, her heart was sorely troubled by this story of the coming of the all-conquering Jocelyn Wright. She remembered the circumstances of her own wooing, and she trembled for her happiness. He had never loved her as he had loved Jocelyn Wright. He had never even pretended to love her so. She had snatched humbly, gratefully, greedily at what he had offered twenty years ago. He had not pretended that it was fine-minted gold; and was she now going to cry because it was counterfeit? Ah, but it was not counterfeit—her own love hotly denied the

charge. He did love her. He was hers—hers by a love deeper than that boy's love for Jocelyn Wright that had almost broken his heart.

Her mind went back twenty-one years. She was again in the boarding house on Madison Avenue, where she lived as companion to her aunt. As companion? As bond slave to a selfish, tyrannical old woman. She recalled with a throb of resentment, even after all these years, the sound of the rapping against the wall of her hall room. It always came when she was deep in the heavy sleep of tired youth. It meant an hour or an hour and a half of preparing food over the little alcohol lamp, of reading to the old lady, of rubbing her hands. What a life that had been in return for a lodgings, and food, and clothing!

If it had not been for Ernest, she would have been still leading that awful nightmare of an existence. Aunt Julianna still lived, nearly eighty now, and perhaps really in need of those services which she had exacted so relentlessly long ago. Edna took a vindictive pleasure in thinking that, at least, Aunt Julianna was paying adequately for the care she received now. A trained nurse on a business basis was a very different human being from a dependent niece on a family basis. Ah, well! The poor old soul!

And to that boarding house Ernest Kimball had drifted. How handsome, how eager he had been at first! A young newspaper reporter with literary ambitions and few friends—it had seemed to Edna that his was a thrilling existence. Loneliness marked him as difficult to please; his newspaper assignments were adventures. He had early singled her out for confidences. She learned later that it was partly because he was so sorry for her; but she knew, too, that it was because he had divined in her a boundless capacity for sympathy and admiration. Ernestina came honestly enough by all those youthful enthusiasms of hers.

He had read her his stories. Well, she had been right in thinking them quite wonderful. Other people thought

*He found her by and by.*

so now, as well as she. Pity that good work was not more profitable. Aunt Juliana's long-deceased Hubert had made a fortune out of a patent beer-bottle stopper; and here was dear Ernest able only to support his family decently upon his really fine thoughts, his fancies, his humors! It was a shame!

But in those old days she had encouraged him, and he had encouraged her. And by and by he had told her that he was engaged to a girl "back home." Edna remembered until this day how the room had gone suddenly gray when she first heard the name of Jocelyn Wright. It had not been pride that had sustained her, and had kept her from tears; it had been devotion to him—she could not bear to let him think that she did not sympathize heart-wholly in his joy.

And so she had tortured herself with questions about the girl he loved. She had learned the story of her perfections—of her beauty, her intellect, her breadth of view, her charms of manner. Poor Edna had looked despairingly in her mirror after the first description of Miss Wright's complexion, eyes, hair. She remembered it still—the camellia-blossom skin, the eyes of starshine and beryl—Ernest had been rather florid in his literary style in his earlier days—the pomegranate mouth—Edna had never seen a pomegranate, and neither

had Ernest at that period; but the description was none the less wonderful on that account. How she had despised her own poor gifts—her thin skin, with its tricks of freckling and burning in sun and wind; her blue eyes, her commonplace brown hair!

Sometimes he had been wont to read her extracts from the wonderful Jocelyn's letters. She had never cared for them; they had seemed cold to her, although she had envied the writer the distinction of expression which they had. Ernest had admired that, also.

"She doesn't think so," he had told Edna; "but she can write. She and I shall write together—collaborate. She has a finer sense of values and proportions than I. I'll supply the exuberance of feeling and of action, she the style."

How Edna had wailed that night over the vision of the home which the two—Ernest and Jocelyn—were to have. And he had never wanted her to collaborate with him!

And then Jocelyn had broken the engagement. She had made the familiar discovery of long engagements—that she did not care enough for Ernest to marry him. She would always remain his friend, his comrade, if he would let her.

And Ernest had poured his suicidal grief into Edna's sympathetic ears. How she had hated Jocelyn! How willing she would have been, in the violence



She watched the straight, slender figure in pale-blue linen between the two girls.

of her partisanship, to go to the beautiful and gifted young person, and force her to marry Ernest. She felt equal to the undertaking. How she had longed to take his dear head into her arms, and let him find there such comfort as sorrow-smitten little boys find in their mothers' arms!

Of course, that was what she had done in effect when she had accepted his offer of marriage. He had found her crying because Aunt Juliana had been particularly unbearable that day, and because life was so tragic, and love so bitter, and for a number of other excellent reasons. And he had asked her if she knew of a really good cause why they should not join their two miserable lives. He cared more for her than for any other woman except *the woman*. He would give her all that remained of his life and his heart if she would take it. Besides, he couldn't bear to see her

cry on account of that unreasonable old tyrant, her aunt.

Twenty years ago! Twenty years of happy, busy, contented, useful living. And now the love of his youth was coming to spoil it all!

Mrs. Kimball arose, and stood before the mirror. There was no disguising the fact that the years had not treated her as they were reported to have treated Jocelyn Wright. Even if Ernest, and Billy, and Ernestina, and Jimmie were all removed,

Edna could not believe that "loads of men" would camp upon her trail. No long line of automobiles would block the way before her door. She was a middle-aged woman; her brown hair was thinner than it had been twenty years ago, and it was much less brown. Of course, she should have had it treated; but when did she have time for such things? The thin skin had wrinkled early, the blue eyes looked out through a network of fine lines, the forehead was lined, the lips were set in a parenthesis. She had a double chin—there was no use in attempting to palliate the dreadful fact; and her figure had settled into heavy, dowdy, middle-aged lines.

What an unutterable fool she had been, so to let herself "go to pieces"! She had always known of Ernest's admiration for physical beauty, but he had never run after it, and she had never had a moment's jealousy; but why

should it have needed the spur of jealousy to drive her into the course which was the obviously proper one? And now Jocelyn Wright was coming, still a beauty at thirty-nine! And dressed like a duchess! And "up"—oh, of course, "up"—on all those things in which Ernest was interested. Didn't she have the chair of English at Woodley? And when had she, Edna Kimball, read any other book than the one which her husband produced annually? It would serve her right when she lost him! It would serve her right!

Oh, of course, she was not going to lose him in any hideous and vulgar way—Ernest was a gentleman. He would hate to see her cry to-day as much as he had hated it in the days of Aunt Julian's reign. And, of course, the professors of English at colleges for women don't go eloping with old suitors. But she would lose her husband, nevertheless—she would lose him in that dear, comfortable, silent sense of intimacy and security in which they had dwelt for so long.

The dreams of his youth, the lovely light of romance that had never glowed for her, would come again—ah, she knew, she knew! What was so lovely, so sacred in life as first love? And Ernest was an artist besides being a man. Every dream meant more to him than to the ordinary wayfarer.

She was glad that he was in the city, engaged in the cheerful author's occupation of threatening to change the publisher for his new book, unless the present gentleman, whose privilege it was to present the children of his fancy to the world, should guarantee to advertise him better. She had a wild thought of joining him, of keeping him away from Porpoise Bay for the rest of the season.

But what was the use? Some day it would come. She might as well face it now. She wished that Ernest had been a fishmonger or a cobbler, though. Then he would have forgotten his first love. He would have cherished no memories. Ah, yes, he would! All men did. The one thing that truly possessed them was the dream that had gone unfulfilled.

Her eyes fell upon her hands, unac-

customedly idle in her lap. Her forefinger was pricked from the eternal needle that she had held for the last twenty years. Her thumb was blistered where it had come in contact with the electric iron yesterday when she was "doing up" Ernestina's Irish collar in the bathroom. She was an idiot to do up Ernestina's fine things—better that they should all be ruined than that her husband should not have a wife's hand worthy to kiss.

She rang the bell imperiously. She summoned a manicure. Afterward, behind closed doors, she had her hair shampooed and dressed. Recklessly she accepted the coiffeur's dictum that she needed a few puffs—and she ordered them. She had her face massaged, and donned her crispest linen frock for luncheon.

"How sweet you look, mumsey!" said Ernestina when next she saw her mother. "I know what you're all so gay for!"

"Is a clean linen frock 'all so gay'?" asked Edna coldly.

Women were wiser who didn't lose their looks and their charm bearing and rearing children. Ernestina was not worth the loss of a husband's love. Ah, but she had never had a husband's love—only his pity, his need of companionship.

"It is with you, don't you think?" responded the veracious Ernestina, in regard to the clean linen frock. "But I know why you're all gotten up regardless. Don't you, Billy?"

"Sure thing!" said Billy, twinkling down upon his mother from his father's height of six feet, and with his father's own amused eyes.

"Why is it?" she asked.

Could the wretched children, with their diabolical shrewdness, have guessed?

"Because the eminent author, Ernest Kimball, is due on the three-thirty," replied her son, and her daughter laughed corroboratingly.

"I didn't know it!" cried Edna. "How did you hear?"

"Telegram telephoned over from the Point. I thought you would have it when you waked up—the old Cart-

wright cat said you had gone up for a rest, so I didn't come up myself with the message."

"When," asked Edna, with a sinking heart, "is your new divinity expected, Ernestina—Miss Wright?"

"Why, she's coming down on the same train!" cried the delighted Ernestina. "Katherine told me—isn't it fun? Perhaps she'll know dad from his pictures, and will speak to him. She could, you know. She teaches English, and so it would be perfectly natural and—"

"Come in to luncheon, children," interrupted the mother. "Where is Jack?"

His first love! Unchanged, so far as Edna had heard, from her beautiful girlhood. His first love! They would have met and spoken to each other—she who had remained unwed all these years, why? Had she learned too late that, after all, it had been true love she had plighted to him in the old, old days? They would look into each other's eyes, and there, back of the humdrum experiences of life, back of the disillusionments, what would they find? Would they tell each other what they found?

There would be no great disloyalty in it. They would ride together through the pine woods, they would have their little glimpses of the sea as the train whirled along the coast. Would they think of the journeys they had once planned to take together? Would they speak of them?

"You're not eating a blessed thing, mother!" exclaimed the observing Ernestina. "You are an old softy! When I've been married for ages and ages, I shan't lose my appetite just because my husband is coming home!"

"Ernestina, you are pert without being in the least amusing," said Edna curtly; and the young girl looked at her, amazed and hurt. "Mumsey" never spoke like that, though now and then father's methods were severe.

They were embarked upon their journey from the city now, the two of whom she was so poignantly aware. Suppose—suppose that they had decided not to come to Porpoise Bay, after all? Suppose that, meeting unexpectedly, they

had been swept by an irresistible impulse, that the past had claimed them, seized them? In one of Ernest's books it had been so. She wondered why she had not thought more of that episode at the time. It would be no impossible thing.

"Are you going to meet father at the station, mother?" inquired Ernestina, in a subdued voice, after a time.

"No," replied Edna sharply.

"She must have a nasty headache," Ernestina confided to Billy after luncheon. "And yet she looked so fresh and well when she came downstairs."

Edna, with a parasol and a book, a great nervous dread, and a palpitating heart, was in a favorite nook of hers among the rocks when she heard the afternoon train puff into the station a half mile inland from the beach. She fixed her eyes upon the hotel entrance. By and by the omnibus would draw up in front of it, and her husband would alight—her husband, and who else?

She strained her eyes toward the piazza. The whole rocking-chair brigade was out, as usual. If Ernest should so much as offer his hand to Jocelyn Wright to help her alight, they would all see it, all comment upon it; by night they would probably come warning her. That is, of course, if Ernest and Jocelyn were really there; if they had not yielded to the sway of old passion and run away together. Ah, there was the bus now!

But she closed her eyes. She didn't want to see them alight. When she opened them again, the bus was racketing back to the stables, its passengers were scattered into the hotel. Had Ernest come? If he had, he would know where to find her—if he cared!

He found her by and by.

"I am glad you didn't come to the train, dear. The kids say you have a bad headache."

"I haven't!" snapped Edna, searching his face for a sign of repressed feeling, repressed memory.

"Well, I'm glad you haven't, for I want your advice." He was eager, animated, interested.

"Yes? What about?"

"It's about the new contract that the Perleys want me to sign with them. Here's a copy of it. After you've read it and told me what you think of it, I'll tell you what Travers said about it. But I want you to form your own unprejudiced judgment first."

"You've seen Travers, then?" Travers was his lawyer.

"Yes. But you know that I value your opinion—your intuition, I suppose it is—almost higher than Travers' legal knowledge."

elbow to look across from Edna's nook of rocks to the beach.

"The inevitable Katherine," he announced, "and a woman who came down on the train with me. I don't know who she is, though I had an uneasy feeling that I ought to. I found her staring at me two or three times, too, as though she had the same uneasy conviction. One meets too many people."

Edna raised herself, also, and scanned the retreating trio. She felt a sudden



He watched the trio on the beach, and murmured once or twice: "Jocelyn Wright—I really believe it was!"

She began to read the paper when she heard the sound of Ernestina's voice behind the cliff—Ernestina's, and Katherine's, and another's. Her face grew tense.

"Listen!" she whispered.

"What to? Our daughter's melodious accents? I do hope they'll teach Ernestina to lower her voice at Woodley. She's positively noisy."

"Look! See who's with her," whispered Edna, when the sound of the voices had passed.

Her husband raised himself on a lazy

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annoyance with her husband as an obtuse, unromantic creature. She watched the straight, slender figure in pale-blue linen between the two girls; she noted the embroidered parasol, the grace of the chip hat brim, the rich, coppery color of the hair that showed beneath.

"Oh!" She turned mockingly upon him. "Oh! So you had an uneasy sense that you had met her somewhere, had you? Shall I tell you who she is?"

"Yes, if you know, and it's no secret," he answered, studying her face in some surprise.

"It is Miss Jocelyn Wright."

He continued to look at her for a puzzled half second. Then his face cleared.

"By Jove, I believe you're right!" he exclaimed. "I believe you're right! But how did you know?"

She told him. He watched the trio on the beach, and murmured once or twice: "Jocelyn Wright—I really believe it was!"

"Strange you didn't recognize that camellia-blossom skin, those eyes of star shine and beryl, those pomegranate lips."

Through her relief Edna felt a jealousy in behalf of Jocelyn Wright—in behalf of her whole sex. Did men remember nothing?

Her husband looked at her and laughed.

"Did I talk all that rot?" he asked.

Then he looked at her more attentively. He leaned over, and lifted her plump little hand to his lips. He kissed

the blistered thumb, the needle-pricked forefinger.

"But she is still young, still beautiful!" half sobbed Edna.

"She is certainly well preserved, if that was she on the train," he admitted. "But—take a walk into the town with me when the sun gets cooler, dear. I want you to see some very fine, whole-preserved pears that Lemly, the grocer, has; and some sweet, plain, little apples ripening on their trees, on the way. Will you come?"

"Yes," said Edna, laughing, and blushing, and ashamed that he should so easily read her.

"And now, about the contract—By Jove! To think that that was Jocelyn Wright! Oh, Edna, what miraculous escapes we have in this world of chance! Give me your hand again; I don't care who sees us. After all, it isn't so improper for a man to hold his wife's hand when they've been married twenty years, is it?"



Our Romance

WE dreamed of sun-warmed grass and flowers.
Smile, dear, o'er our vain dreams,
For smiles best fit in love like ours,
That holds its meed of withered flowers,
Its meed of unborn dreams.

We planned to wave a fairy wand
And weld a chain of gold.
And as we planned, so others planned.
Perhaps they found the fairy wand—
Perhaps we found the gold.

So little that we dreamed came true—
So much that ne'er was dreamed.
And which was gain we hardly knew,
But we were ever stanchly true
To what we both had dreamed.

The sun-kissed flowers, the leisured way,
We missed. The chain of gold
Eludes our eyes; but, dear, each day
We've bravely walked adown the way.
Is that the weld of gold?

GEORGE FOXHALL.

FIXING it for CAP'N NEWT.

By Holman E. Day.

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

BY no stretch of the imagination could it be said that Cap'n Aaron Sproul was a merry table companion for his wife at dinner that day. For a man freshly relieved of the duties of high sheriff, home again in the bosom of his family, he presented a strange picture of worry, dejection, and gruff uneasiness. Every now and then, while chewing a mouthful, he scowled through the dining-room window into a bland September day that ought to have melted the mood of a Bashi-Bazouk. To certain gentle queries of Louada Murilla, he growled replies vaguely disconcerting.

Occasionally he surveyed with fierce interest a certain decoration that his wife had suspended on the wall of the room shortly after their marriage. From the cap'n's curios she had selected a couple of wooden belaying pins, had crossed them, and hung them over a marine picture, looping with them mingled green and red ribbons, emblematic of starboard and port.

When he had finished his meal, Cap'n Sproul dragged a chair to the wall, mounted it, and took down the belaying pins. He thrust one into each hip pocket, buttoned his coat, and seemed about to start forth on an expedition.

"For mercy's sakes, Aaron, where you going, looking like that, and what are you going to do?"

She hurried between him and the door.

"I'm goin' over to make a little social, neighborly call on my friend, Cap'n Al-bannah Newt," stated the cap'n grimly.

Mrs. Sproul rapidly searched her apprehensive mind for knowledge of any possible strained relations between the two.

"He was here last night to supper,



and you went to walk with him this morning, and you were all right then," she quavered.

"Nothin' been said, has there, to indicate we ain't all right now?" inquired her husband severely.

"But you've acted all through dinner as though there was something on your mind! You've been odd, and offish, and glum! And when you took down those two sticks there, you looked savage."

"Louada Murilla," said the cap'n, "there's lots of business that two sea cap'n's might have together, in their own line of work, that shore folks, like you, wouldn't understand about, not even if I told 'em."

"Then you're taking those things over to his house to try some sea experiments with them?" she ventured, her face clearing a bit.

"Mebbe," said the cap'n, with non-committal shortness.

One of his little boasts to himself was that he had never lied to his wife. Now he hurried out of the house with sudden fear that the exigency of that occasion might oblige him to transgress.

But he stopped at the gate, pondered a few moments, and came back to the

house. The recollection of the wistfulness of the look on her face had touched him.

"I'm hopin' there ain't goin' to be any serious trouble come out of this, Louada Murilla," he said, trying to reassure her, but only doubling her alarm.

"I knew there was something the matter!" she gasped, growing pale.

"I aint just sure of my course. I haven't got charts for the waters I'm in now," he went on gravely. "The wind shifted so Almighty sudden that she gybed on me, and scooted into the breakers. But I'll go over to Newt's, and take soundin's, and—"

"For mercy's sake, Aaron, quit that sea lingo!" she implored. "I don't get head nor tail to it. What is the trouble, anyway?"

"Well, if I've got to give it out to you in primer lessons, I'll go ahead and do it," he snapped testily. "I thought you'd lived with me long enough to understand plain, man's talk when you heard it. We had Newt and Miss Diadema Bellmore over here to supper last night, didn't we? Your and my idee was that we'd make a match between 'em, eh? Sent 'em off home together, didn't we, to help the scheme, seein' that Newt had to have his head bumped up against hers to make him wake up? Well, they met a lot of the old gossips of this place, and the old gossips have gone to lettin' the sails slat, as they usually do, and have got the marriage all settled except day and date. Now is that primer lesson plain enough for you to see through?"

"Don't be snappy with me, Aaron," she begged him plaintively. "It's news to me that anybody was gossiping about what's none of their business. All I know is that Captain Newt came around this morning and called you out, and you went away with him, and came back home, and have been as glum as a brass image ever since."

He looked at her a moment, and his scowl of impatience melted into wrinkles of worriment. His heart told him that he needed a woman's counsel just then. And his good sense told him that he would have asked for it before had he

not been ashamed to own up to the predicament in which he found himself.

"Louada Murilla," he confessed, "I might as well own up to you that I'm in a confounded mess. Here was Cap'n Newt just off the sea, like I was, and I wanted him to quit keepin' old bach hall, and marry a nice woman, and settle down for good in this neighborhood, and be happy ever after, just the way I am. I had been puttin' it up to him, and he had squirmed some, but I thought it was only a sailor's natural bashfulness. I thought I wouldn't say anything to you about his backwardness in shinin' up to the right woman, for I thought I could shape him up into the right way.

"But this thing ain't workin' out as I thought it was goin' to. He was in a terrible state of mind when he came over here this mornin' to tell me about the gossip. There's more than bashfulness back of it. He took on so that I had to—that is, I took it on myself to drag him over to Miss Bellmore's to straighten the thing out for him, all nice and polite. Now, Louada Murilla, you take sharp note of what I tell you, in case this thing goes further! My idee was to go to Miss Bellmore with him, and set him right—that is, explain to her for him that he wasn't to blame for any gossip that was goin', and was sorry that an innocent, neighborly kindness in seein' her home from our house was misunderstood, and then I proposed to slip off, and, as you might say, let nature take its course."

"There couldn't have been anything kinder-spirited or politer than that, Aaron," his faithful wife hastened to assure him, for his face was downcast.

"Them was my intentions," he protested. "I want you to understand that! In case anything comes up later, you stand ready to swear that my intentions was just that. But I reckon I must have slipped on the drum when I began to pay out the politeness cable. I mean to say, Louada, that I reckon I must have been too blasted flowery in my politeness. She snapped me up right in the middle of it. Do you know what she thought?"

His wife shook her head slowly, staring at him speechlessly. His solemn air frightened her more and more.

"Well, sir, she jumped to the conclusion that Newt, not bein' much of a hand to talk to wimmen, had got me to come over with him, and propose to her for him. Yes, sir, I must have overdone that politeness! That's what she took it for—a proposal! You've bragged so much on him and on sea captains in general that you had her half courted already. You've got to take your share of the responsibility. She began to cry, and said it was such a surprise that she couldn't stand it to have any more said just then; but she told Newt to drop around to-morrow for his answer."

"What is she going to say to him?" asked his wife breathlessly. "Of course, you could tell by the way she spoke and acted whether she was favorably inclined."

"It'll be 'yes,' both hands out, a runnin' jump, and three cheers," stated the cap'n, with a gloominess that did not accord with the felicity of the subject.

"I am so glad," cried his wife ecstatically. "Of course, it came unexpectedly, but so did your proposal to me. But marriages that have a little romance in them, instead of being all cut and dried, are the happiest ones, Aaron."

"You're about as absent-minded as I be myself," chided the cap'n, failing to enthuse. "You're forgettin' the main brace in this thing. You're forgettin' Cap'n Albannal. Newt, sittin' there on the edge of a chair in Miss Diadema Bellmore's parlor. I forgot him myself when I got to sailin' full-and-by in that breeze of politeness. And when she knocked the breath out of me the way she did, I was so dizzy I should have walked out and not thought of him again; but I saw him sittin' on the edge of that chair, and I had to push him off to wake him out of his trance. If ever I saw a stiffer statue of anything representing a human being, outside of the figgerhead of the *Jefferson P. Benn*, I don't remember it at present writin'."

"But you don't mean to tell me he wasn't pleased!" cried his wife tartly.

"Just the same as accepted by a good-lookin' woman who owns a good farm and has money in the bank! You don't mean to tell me that man isn't the happiest man in the town of Scotaze at this minute!"

"If what happened this mornin' in that parlor made him happy," said Cap'n Sproul slowly and meditatively, "then he's the best hand to hide his feelin's of any I've met so far. He tackled me in the road, and called me more new names than ever old Cap Kidd could lay tongue to in his palmiest days. If I hadn't pushed him over into the gutter, and come away and left him, he'd have licked me. Mebbe he's happy, and took that way to show it; but I have doubts."

The enormity of that recalcitrancy shocked Louada Murilla, and she declared herself on the subject with much indignation. But the cap'n checked her.

"When a man is mad—when he is so mad that his hair stands straight up, and his eyes are green, and he spits like a cat, he is apt to let things drop that hint at the truth. I had been thinkin' that all that ailed him was backwardness and bashfulness, and mebbe little general suspicition of the sex. But there's more to it, Louada Murilla. There's some kind of a secret back of it."

"What is the secret?" she gasped.

"I'm goin' over to his house and heave the lead once or twice," stated the cap'n, with firm resolve. "Mebbe I'll fetch up a little something on the taller, and mebbe not. But I reckon I will."

He put both hands behind him, made sure that the belaying pins were secure, and started away.

"Aaron!" his wife cried after him. "Aaron!" with apprehensive appeal. "You're going to get into trouble more than you're in now. I know you'll get into trouble."

"Well, I'm in it a'ready, ain't I?" he grunted over his shoulder. "I've gone to work and got a woman torched up to where she thinks she's been proposed to, and waitin' for the natural results; and I've got a man that hasn't proposed lookin' to me to be responsible for the scrape he's in! I'm *in* trouble, I tell you. But if a little lively and healthy,



Cap'n Sproul sat on the porch rail, his hands under his coat tails, in easy reach of his belaying pins.

kickin' will get me out, here goes for the kickin'! It's only a sociable and neighborly call, Louada Murilla. But if a sheet gets to slippin', there's nothin' like a half hitch around a belayin' pin."

He hurried away, though she exhorted him to come back.

When Cap'n Sproul turned in at the gate, Cap'n Albannah Newt was pounding up and down the porch that he termed his "quarter-deck." His mien, when his visitor came up the steps, would have deterred any one of less resolute disposition than a master mariner. Cap'n Sproul sat on the porch rail, his hands under his coat tails, in easy reach of his belaying pins. Cap'n Newt took a few turns before him, twisting his neck as he promenaded so as to keep his malevolent gaze on the new arrival.

"I've dropped over for a little neighborly, social, friendly call," said Cap'n Sproul. Cap'n Newt halted in front of him, hands on his hips, his face convulsed with rage. "And I hate to see

a neighbor in any such frame of mind as you're in now. If I've done anything that——"

"Done anything!" squealed the neighbor. "Done anything!" He flapped a quivering hand in the direction of Miss Diadema Bellmore's house. "Here I was livin' a quiet bach life, and mindin' my own business the best I knew, and you've took me by both ears and rammed me into the mess I'm in now. It's your old puddin' stick of a tongue that has stirred it all up. You slobber-gilled old imitation of a caved-in jellyfish, you——"

"I wouldn't throw in so many of them nat'r'al-history names if I was in your place," advised Cap'n Sproul, working the belaying pins up a bit from the clutch of his hip pockets. "They don't mean nothin' special, and they delay what you're gettin' at. Now, what's your special complaint?"

"Complaint! What's goin' to be done with that woman over there? What's goin' to be said to her?"

"It's been said," returned the cap'n

grimly. "Though she took what I did say different from what I meant it, it's been said to all practical purposes. And as to what's to do—all you've got to do is step across there to-morrow and get your answer. Hold on!" He put up his hand to check further frantic objurgation. "There ain't anything to be said against it for a match. Good looker, good worker, money in the bank, and a good home instead of this old ranch where you're keepin' bach hall. Take what you've got for property and what she's got, and you can set and hold hands, and live happy ever after. I did it unintentional, but I've done a good job for you! And if you don't call it a good job, and don't go ahead now and foller your hand in the matter, then there's something the trouble that'd better be looked into in your case."

It was plain that Cap'n Newt had determined to put a mighty restraint on himself. His hands opened and shut, and his mouth twisted wordlessly.

"If you've got a secret," pursued the cap'n, "it's about time you opened out and let me have it. I'll grab in and help you all I can."

"The help you can give me is to step across there and tell that woman," stated Cap'n Newt between his teeth, holding himself in.

"Tell her what? Tell her that you don't want to marry her now, after all, and insult her, and start a scandal in this town about how you've thrown her over? Is that your notion of bein' a gent?"

Cap'n Newt was plainly driven beyond the bounds of self-control by that extraordinary taunt. It was coolly making him an equal partner in Cap'n Sproul's error—nay, more! It was making him the principal. He began to roll up his sleeves.

"Sproul," he gritted, "language has failed me; but, I reckon, my muscle hasn't. There's only one way for me and you! Come on!"

But Cap'n Sproul pulled out his belaying pins, not menacingly, but with mild, precautionary moderation.

"I brought 'em," he explained, "not because I was lookin' for trouble, but

to keep the meetin' on a social and friendly basis. You and me know what they are, and what they can do, Newt, in keepin' conversation down on the friendly plane where it belongs. Now, to get back to the main point. Do I understand you to say that you're goin' to give Miss Bellmore the mitten? If so, what reasons are you goin' to give her?"

Cap'n Sproul knew seaman's human nature when he stuffed those belaying pins into his pockets. And he understood it, too, when he pulled them out. A pistol would have been only a crude manner of restraining Cap'n Newt. A show of fists would only have provoked senseless battle. But the spectacle of a calm man with a belaying pin in each hand both checked and cowed him. There was something in the sight that appealed to his sense of shipboard discipline. And under that stimulus his mood changed.

"My Gawd, Cap'n Sproul," he wailed, "what are you rubbin' it in for? Give her the mitten? I haven't proposed to her."

"It amounts to that for all practical purposes," insisted his friend. "I'm sorry I messed it, and sorry it has happened—but we might just as well look the thing in the eye, Newt!"

Cap'n Newt sat down limply, and looked "it" in the eye. It was a forlorn and piteous gaze.

"I never saw a man make so much fuss over a little, plain, simple, innocent matter as you're makin' over this," stated Cap'n Sproul. "It's come sudden, like a squall after a wind shift. I realize that! But you're sailorman enough, I hope, to trim sail to meet it, and not carry away any gear. There's an easy way out. Quick as that!"

Cap'n Sproul clacked the belaying pins together to signify celerity.

"How?" inquired the other, with reviving hope.

"Marry and settle down."

"Is that the best advice you got for a man in the trouble I'm in?" asked Cap'n Newt, bridling again.

"Let's have the full story of your trouble. If you've got a secret, break cargo on it! Then we'll see."

"You've been borin' me with a pod auger ever since I've known you," raged Cap'n Newt, leaping up. "It's been pry, and poke, and punch to get at my own private business! But I wouldn't trust you with so much as the secret how to make a mess of doughboys. You've shown your hand, all right! I serve notice on you that I'm runnin' my own affairs after this." Fiery determination lighted his countenance. "The hawser is cast off! Understand? You try to tow me into any more trouble in this town, and you'll get piled up in a style where you can't tell your riggin' from your hull."

He buttoned his coat, and started down the steps at a brisk gait. He took the middle of the road, and headed for Miss Bellmore's house.

"About as tight an old tin can when it comes to keepin' a secret as I've ever seen," Cap'n Sproul remarked to himself, in default of other auditors.

He replaced the belaying pins in his pockets, and sat down in one of the porch chairs. He leisurely filled his pipe, and lighted it, with the air of a man who proposed to stay and see the thing out.

Something to occupy his attention—and occupy it very much—occurred before he had got his pipe fairly to going.

A horse and wagon, that came from a direction opposite to that taken by the determined Cap'n Newt, stopped at the gate. Cap'n Sproul promptly recognized Ben Chute, who conveyed passengers for hire from the Scotaze railroad station. Chute climbed down and helped out a woman, to whom he shouted at the top of his voice:

"He lives here, marm. This is his place what he's hired. There he sets on the piazz."

But, when Mr. Chute gazed at the man on the porch, scrutinizing him with the edge of his palm above his eyes, he noted that the keeper of the castle was Cap'n Aaron Sproul.

The woman was already through the gate, running up the path.

"Sho! I thought you was t'other cap'n," called Chute. "You and him do favor each other. She's a dago of some

kind, Cap'n Sproul, and you'll have to raise your voice to her—she don't seem to understand much English. You can prob'ly tell her where your friend is."

And Mr. Chute, having finished his commission, wheeled his horse, and rattled away.

To Cap'n Sproul's utter amazement, the stranger came leaping up the steps of the porch, gasping strange words of anger, and flourishing a narrow knife that looked particularly dangerous.

"Hold on, marm!" he shouted. "Look twice before you use me for your pin-cushion."

She screamed some foreign words, fairly spitting in her rage when she discovered her error, and turned, as though to pursue the departing Chute. But the wagon was already out of sight behind the wayside alders.

She was a lithe, tall woman, dark-skinned and black-eyed. Cap'n Sproul found those eyes so black when she turned them on him, after an ugly word cast in the fleeing Chute's direction, that he was much discomposed. And the fires in those eyes were fairly lurid.

She thrust toward the cap'n a newspaper scrap that had evidently been her medium of communication with Chute, for she tapped it with her finger, and then shook her fist at the bend of the highway where he had disappeared.

Cap'n Sproul received the scrap gingerly, settled his glasses on his nose, and read aloud:

"The town of Scotaze is pleased to welcome Captain Albannah Newt to its midst. Captain Newt, we understand, is a well-known sea captain who has roved the wide world over, and now is happy to settle far from the raging billows. He has hired the Bray house in our village, and we trust he will like us well enough to stay and follow the example of some other sea captains who have found here in Scotaze a sailor's wife to be a sailor's star."

It was from the Scotaze column in the county paper, served up in the free-and-easy manner of a rural correspondent.

"Yes'm, he lives here," stated Cap'n Sproul, finishing the reading and indicating the premises with comprehensive sweep of his arm. "He's off just now

makin' a—a—well, you might prob'ly call it a social and friendly call. But he'll be right home. Set down and make yourself easy."

She seemed to gather as much information from his liberal gestures as from his words.

"W're he ees?" she demanded. "W're he ees? Eet ees not safe yo' go to mak' fool of me!"

"Certainly not, marm," the cap'n hastened to assure her. "Have too much

flicked it under his nose. "I want heem!"

"You'll get him if you'll only let go your killick and wait here a little while," Cap'n Sproul assured her, with a positiveness that calmed her a bit. "I ain't any hand to pry into secrets, marm; but what might be the reasons for your wantin' him so bad? Relative, or something?" She did not seem to understand. "Sister, niece——"

"I am marry to heem," she said furiously.



To Cap'n Sproul's utter amazement, the stranger came leaping up the steps of the porch.

rèspect for the sex to do anything of the sort."

She remained standing; and the regard she bent on him was so baleful that he was uneasy. She had not put aside the long, sharp knife. He was anxious to divert her attention to more bland topics.

"This is what I call nice fall weather, marm," he proceeded. "Been some little frost in the lowland, but——"

She ripped out an oath that made him jump.

"Heem!" she cried. She snatched the newspaper scrap from his fingers and

ously. "Understand, old fool? I am marry. He desert. So long as he sail on the sea I follow heem from port to port, for the newspaper geeve hees name in the sheep news. But he run off the sea. He hide. And this—this—I see!" She shook the paper under the cap'n's nose again. "And I follow."

"Exactly, marm.. Nothin' like havin' a nose for news, and then follerin' your nose. Well, if Newt ain't an old rat!"

He sat down on the porch rail and stared at her.

"Yes, sir, he's certainly a devil where the wimmen are concerned. Why, he's

gone to work right here in this place and made up to—”

Cap'n Sproul checked himself prudently. He decided that he did not dare to risk touching match to that particular form of explosive he was looking at just then.

“You go on and say.”

Her eyes were boring him like gimlets.

“You haven't had good luck, cornerin' him and catchin' him up to date, as I figger it, marm?” he asked. He checked her fierce objurgations. “No, so I gather from what you say. Now, if you want this thing straightened out, I'm the feller to straighten it out.” He slapped his hand on his breast. “I'm a seafarin' man, and I know how to handle them that's been in the same business. You need help. You don't go at it right. What do you think you're goin' to accomplish with a whoop and a carvin' knife?” He looked at her sternly. “Suppose I had been your husband just now when you came runnin' up them steps with blood in your eyes and a toad stabber in your hand? Would I have rose up to give you three cheers and a kiss?”

She broke in with shrill invective, but he had a voice of his own. He bawled “Shut up!” at her till she was silent.

“You need a guarddeen—you and him both! You've tried your own way with him, haven't you? And what has come out of it? Nothin' but grief and gallivantin'. If you want this fixed up, I'll fix it. Do you want it fixed?”

She moderated her rage sufficiently to inform him that this was what she did want.

“Then you'll have to take advice,” he stated firmly. “Gimme that knife! Gimme that knife, or I'll arrest you for carryin' weapons. This ain't the kind of a town where we let wimmen carve up husbands. Hand it over, or into the calaboose you go!” He secured it, and tucked it down beside one of the belaying pins in his hip pocket. “Now he's about due—or he ought to be,” he added, looking anxiously in the direction of Miss Bellmore's house. “You go inside there and set quiet, and keep your yawp

shut till I tell you to come out. I'm goin' to handle this case from now on!” He took her by the shoulders, and pushed her in. “You set down to that parlor organ of his, and play and sing pennyr'yal hymns to yourself till I see him comin'. You've got a disposition that needs to be soothed, marm. I don't know whether it needs music, sweet oil, or a hickory switch—but it needs *something*, and needs it bad.”

He shut the door on her.

She did not take his advice in regard to the organ. After listening a while, he relighted his pipe, feeling well satisfied with the silence that reigned within, and with the general situation as it stood up to date.

Between puffs at his pipe, he ejaculated over and over again:

“The old rat! Courtin' one woman when he's married to another!”

Fortified with his new sense of responsibility in the matter, Cap'n Sproul conveniently chose to forget the part he himself had played in rushing the unhappy Cap'n Newt into his dilemma with Miss Bellmore. Mingled with the cap'n's self-communing, as he sat there on the porch, gazing down the road, was wonder as to what Cap'n Newt was doing over at the Bellmore house, and why he went over there, anyway.

He was relieved when he saw his friend returning. He came walking in the middle of the road. His shoulders were hunched forward, his head was down, and his feet dragged up the dust.

“He don't act as though he was steppin' off to the tune of a weddin' march,” pondered Cap'n Sproul.

He glanced behind him, to make sure that the door was closed, called a hoarse warning to the woman inside to mind her eye and keep still, and awaited the arrival of the victim with calm visage.

Cap'n Newt shuffled up the walk, stumbled up on the porch, and fell limply into a chair.

“It's hell scorched on both sides, that's what it is!” he groaned, after a few moments.

Cap'n Sproul, having decided to play the waiting game, rocked on the hind legs of his tilted chair, and was silent.



"They all stood up and shook hands with me, and said they was happy to have me in the family."

Cap'n Newt set his elbows on his knees, and fixed his eyes on a crack between the floor boards.

"It seems queer to me," pursued the newly returned, "that I didn't borrow a gun somewhere as I came along home, and shoot you first sight, no explanation, no argument. It seems queer I don't rise up now and taller this quarter-deck with you. But I don't seem to have no gumption, no sprawl, no spirit left. Things have happened that have took all my muscle and grit out of me. I'm just walkin' around in my sleep. I feel like I've dreamt before now—that I was tryin' to walk through molasses up to my knees."

Cap'n Sproul offered no comment.

"I went over acrost there like a man, to tell her you were an old fool with your slobberin' tongue, and to explain, man fashion, that she had mistaken what was intended to be said. I had it all thought out how I was goin' to say it—thankin' her for kind thoughts of me, and sorry things were as they were, and we would forgive and forget, and so forth, and let it drop. And so I went over." He was talking as one communes with himself. "I went in. And there in the parlor were a lot of uncles, and aunts, and cousins that she had collected to have a talk with 'em about her marriage proposal. Near's I can judge, they'd all voted in the affirmative, and the meetin' was ready to ad-

journ. They all stood up and shook hands with me, and passed me the compliments of the season, and said they was happy to have me in the family."

"Well, that gave you a nice chance then to tell 'em that a mistake had been made," suggested Cap'n Sproul. "Nothin' like havin' t'other parties open up a delicate subject."

"A good chance!" bleated Cap'n Newt plaintively. "A good chance to say that I was only foolin'? A chance to say that you and me was workin' a little joke on her? Every one of them cousins and uncles was six feet tall, and had hands on 'em like Virginny hams—I noticed them hands when I was congratulated. What was I goin' to say at that late hour that would sound sensible or decent? If I was anyways ready with my tongue in a tight corner, I would never have set quiet when you went to work and got me into the mess, in the first place. I ain't ready with my tongue. I forgot the speech I come with. I forgot everything. Stand up there after I had shook hands with 'em all, and say that I was sorry?—but it couldn't be done. The only sensible thing I done was to come away just as soon as I could."

He groaned.

"So now you *be* engaged—engaged all up tight and solid?" suggested Cap'n Sproul dryly.

"I dread to think what might happen to me from them uncles and cousins if I should stand up now and say I *wasn't* engaged," returned Cap'n Newt mournfully. "One of the aunts writes for the paper, and she's goin' to send off a little item about it—and Gawd knows why I want to keep out of the paper! I was tryin' to keep out of the paper—tryin' to keep out of trouble with wimmen, dum baste ye to the thickness of a flounder! I had my private and personal reasons. And you went right on just the same. I say, it's queer why I don't rise up, and make salt hoss of you. Spirit's all gone, though. Now, I'll have them uncles and cousins chasin' me through the world, as well as—" He did not finish the sentence. "Yes, I'm engaged all right now!" he sneered.

Cap'n Sproul looked at him out of the corners of his eyes.

"Newt," he said, "I've heard of rattlers among the wimmen in my time; but I didn't expect to find you such an old rat! The first time I came to call on you—or mebbe it was the second—I found you stuck up in front of that parlor organ of yours, singin' a song about how wimmen was worse'n hyenas—and yet—yet"—the cap'n paused to give his words full weight—"you ain't content to be married to one wife—you've got to go and get engaged to another woman!"

Cap'n Newt flopped in his chair as though he had received a galvanic shock. The inquisitor faced his victim's goggling eyes with composure that hinted at possession of all the facts in the case.

"Will say that Number One is dark-completed, a guinea of some breed or other, without much command of the English language except when she swears in it; and seems to have a relish for doin' embroidery work on the human hide with a special croshay needle that she carries. There's a bulletin for you on what I know to date. If you need further facts, I'm prepared to produce 'em."

Cap'n Newt's face showed that he was too utterly confounded to attempt denial.

"You're terrible sly with your secrets where your friends are concerned," continued Cap'n Sproul; but added complacently: "I'm quite a mouser when I set out to hunt a thing down."

"I ain't married to her. You're a liar when you say so!" declared Cap'n Newt, with much heat. "I got a bill of divorce all good and regular, and I had good cause for gettin' it. She's the most infernal—"

"Seems to be some misunderstandin' about that bill of divorce, doesn't there?" inquired his persistent friend. "She doesn't agree with you, does she?"

"She never did agree with me about anything when we lived together," said the other; "and I don't expect her to agree with me when I'm tryin' to get shet of her."

"Looks as though you'd have to call me in as referee. I'm a good judge of matrimony in general, and I ain't pushed up with other business just now, and I'll serve free gratis for nothin'."

"Ain't sure you wouldn't be willin' to give something to boot, be you, for the sake of stickin' your nose a little farther into my private business?" asked Cap'n Newt, his voice quivering with indignation.

"I'm willin' to overlook twits and remarks just now," returned Cap'n Sproul serenely, "for you're more or less wrought up. I ain't surprised that you are. Bein' married to a guinea cata-mound would furnish most men with all the trouble they needed, to say nothin' of havin' proposed to another. I've got to warn you, Newt, that the menfolks in that Bellmore fam'ly are dretful touchy and unreasonable in any dispute. I had a little run-in with 'em on a line-fence matter when I first settled here, and their principal hankerin' seemed to be to fight first and argue afterward. It's always that way with them double-fisted kind. I'm forewarnin' so as to forearm you."

Cap'n Newt arose and buttoned his coat. His appearance was so ferocious that Cap'n Sproul hastily pulled out one of his belaying pins.

"You needn't worry," hissed his victim. "I know full well what I ought to do to you; but I ain't goin' to waste time in stoppin' and doin' it. I picked out the last place in God's universe to come, and settle, and hide in. Now I'm goin' up in a balloon. I'm goin' and climb a tree, and then pull the tree up. I'm goin' to take passage, and dive off where the water's five miles deep."

"I don't think—I really don't think that it'll be the sense of this town to let you run away until you've straightened things out a little," remarked Cap'n Sproul judicially.

He was wondering whether this were not the moment for summoning the foreign woman to the deliberations. But at that moment he caught sight of men coming up the road. He recognized them as the cousins and uncles of Dia-dema Bellmore.

"Newt," he advised, "you'd better set down and look as calm as you can. Something has bust out in the Bellmore fam'ly; and, if you run now when they're lookin' at you, you'll be givin' half your case away at the send-off."

Cap'n Newt's baleful countenance did not indicate that this counsel stayed him. But he sat down weakly, mumbling under his breath.

The men turned in at his gate. They lined themselves up in front of the porch. A particularly surly-looking uncle opened the subject promptly.

"Cap'n Newt," he said, "we happened to meet Ben Chute down the road, and he tells us that he has just left at your house a woman who was takin' considerable more interest in you than is generally considered allowable in a case where a man has just proposed to some one else. We have called, as a committee, to find out who that woman is, and what she wants here."

Cap'n Newt began to divide glances of mingled horror, rage, and fear between Cap'n Sproul and the closed door of his mansion.

"Our relative, Miss Bellmore, is a lone woman, and it behooves us to see that her interests are protected. Of course, the word of Cap'n Sproul and his wife has gone a good ways with us and her in your case, but we don't stand for no strange wimmen poppin' in here and bein' hid on the premises. So go ahead and explain."

But Cap'n Newt could only make strange noises in his throat; and his face told a story that did not reassure his visitors.

"There's a queer look to this thing," growled one of the strapping cousins.

"If any insult or scandal has been passed up to the Bellmore family, the man that has done it will wish he hadn't—that's all I've got to say," stated another of the group.

"If everything is open and al-ve-board," said the uncle, "we stand ready to be invited to step in and make an inspection of the premises and of things that may happen to be on it. Or there is such a thing as steppin' in without be-



"Sly around the house on your hands and knees."

in' invited, in case the Bellmore family finds any one thumin' their nose at it!"

But, at the first step toward the porch, Cap'n Sproul produced his second belaying pin, and put himself on guard before the door.

"Gents," he said firmly, "I've been selectman of this town, high sheriff of this county, and big taxpayer for some years here, and I reckon I'm entitled to be called a representative citizen, ain't I?"

They assented without enthusiasm.

"Well, then, for myself and other representative citizens of this town, I state that I don't propose to see a man's house ransacked on the word of old Ben Chute."

Cap'n Newt staggered close to his prot^{ector}, and whispered hoarsely:

"Is she in there?"

"Big as life," the cap'n informed him, in cautious undertone.

"Then Gawd help the orphan and the friendless!" gasped Cap'n Newt.

He stood trembling, trying to look at the fateful door and at the enemy in front at the same time—doeful picture of one trapped between tiger and bears.

"Miss Bellmore seems to have a considerable supply of relatives on the spot," Cap'n Sproul went on, with offended dignity; "and I want to ask you if it's anyways strange that Cap'n Albannah Newt should have at least one of his own?" "If it's a relative, then why is all this mystery about it?" inquired the spokesman.

"Didn't know there was any mystery," replied Cap'n Sproul tartly. "Ain't any so far's we're concerned—but it ain't to be understood that the whole devilish Bellmore family is goin' to traipse in here botherin' a relative that's takin' her ease after a railroad trip. Now, no more talk from you!" he shouted. "You clear out and away, or I'll break the engagement right here and now in behalf of my friend, Newt; and I'll inform Miss Bellmore that you were the ones responsible."

When they retired rather slowly, he went down and pushed them out of the yard; and they went away, apologizing finally, after he had pricked them with reproaches.

Either Cap'n Sprout's orders or the disturbance outside had availed to keep the foreign woman close in the castle. The master of ceremonies, however, made assurance doubly sure by rushing back on the porch and grabbing the handle of the door. He was not ready to interject her into the proceedings.

"Newt," he said briskly, "you've been holdin' me responsible for the Bellmore complications. Well, the account between us on that point is crossed off by what I've just done. I've lied to my neighbors good and plenty; but that's all right. I got you in, you say. Well, then, I've got you out. No more twists on that line!"

"But I ain't out," wailed Cap'n Newt. "It's only been postponed."

"I just heard you say something about goin' up in a balloon, didn't I? Well, now is your time to do it. The sentiment of the citizens of this town has changed about keepin' you here—I'm representin' the citizens. Have you got your money on you?"

Cap'n Newt patted his breast pocket, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"Then you scoot whilst I hold this door. If you want that parlor organ and your duds shipped to you, when you come down out of the balloon, drop me a line. But understand me, Newt! My responsibility only goes as far as gettin' you out of the Bellmore scrape. T'other one you got into yourself, and I'm allowin' you an hour's start, for the sake of fair play. Tiptoe off the porch, and sly around the house on your hands and knees. I'm goin' to miss you as a neighbor to swap master-mariner talk with; but I realize that, after all that's come up, you wouldn't be quite as sociable and companionable. Run up all canvas, and sail full-and-by—a stern chase is a long one."

When the fugitive was safely around the corner of the house, Cap'n Sproul rattled the doorknob, and the voice of the woman hailed him from the other side of the door.

"Marm," he called, without opening, "you'll have to wait a little while. The plot is thickenin'. I don't want to hear any talk or arguments. I'm runnin' this thing!"

Evidently she so understood it, and, being ignorant of what was happening, resigned herself to imprisonment with such grace as was possible. Cap'n Sproul pulled a chair to the door, and sat down, his pipe for solace, his mind having sufficient material for an hour's very profitable pondering.

When he at last opened the door and

called her out, he placed ten five-dollar bills in her hand, having had them ready counted.

"Between sailormen, marm," he stated, "some certain rules and regulations have to be observed. I won't try to explain 'em, for you'll find your time too valuable to waste on me. Your husband has got just an hour's start of you!" He pointed in the direction of the railroad station. "Rules and regulations between sea captains!" he shouted, crying down her furious language. "If you need money for car fare, you've got it. I'm quite a collector of curiosities, and I've paid you that fifty dollars for the croshay needle that you handed me to look at."

It occurred to her undoubtedly that remaining to bandy threats with this grim individual would not profit her. She shook her fists at him, and vanished around the corner of the house.

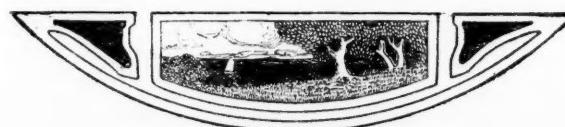
Cap'n Sproul took a turn in the old Bray house, fastened the windows, and came out, and locked the door behind him, slipping the key into his pocket.

"I'll tell Louada Murilla the truth," he pondered, as he walked home. "But for them Bellmores, it has got to be some of the best tall and fancy lyin' I ever put out in my life. But I ain't worryin'! It'll be a good one when I get around to it!"

He paused on the hill that overlooked the valley down which the railway ran. He heard the hoot of a locomotive.

"It's as I figured," he muttered. "He had time to catch the train. She'll have to take the next one. Whatever was goin' to happen, I thought it was better to have it happen outside of Scotaze. I hate to have my own town mussed up."

Then, with the virtuous reflections of "a representative citizen," who has acted in the best interests of all concerned, he plodded on home.





In-Laws

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

TO my mind, the highest exponent of modern civilization is that human being distinguished by a sense of justice, accompanied by a feeling of affection, for the genus known to us all as "in-laws."

Personally, I am proud to say that I like my in-laws sincerely. They are really an unusually rare group; but truth compels me to confess that I am not just to them. Yet, in this consciousness of shortcoming, I feel that I am merely representative of my kind. For my friends, the men and women I know, are in almost every instance a little prejudiced, a little peculiar, a little unfair whenever the subject of in-laws is introduced. You know what I mean, more particularly if you understand women, are by chance a woman yourself.

For instance, there is Nora, the sweetest of wives, the most generous of friends, a devoted sister, loyal to the core. And every one who knows those two, Nora and her own mother, appreciates that even Nora's genuinely happy marriage has not lessened by one atom her adoration of that comradely, charming, comprehending mother of hers. Doubtless they recognize each other's faults with the clear vision of intellectual maturity; but, balanced against these faults, what wonderful virtues they find each in the other, what qualities of mind and spirit, what omnipotent love!

Nora possesses also a mother-in-law,

with whom she "gets along beautifully." All the world says this, including Nora and her admirable mother-in-law.

But you and I who know Nora intimately have heard her speak quite frankly now and then concerning her husband's mother. To outsiders, there are many evidences of harmony; but to us there are revealing and memorable moments. And yet the conversation begins placidly enough.

"Jack's mother is such a dear!" says Nora. "And isn't her snow-white hair distinguished, with the little widow's peak and the ripple over the ear? I'm so glad Jack's dark mop is like it in quality, so thick, and soft, and wavy."

"Yes," say I, honestly meaning to be at once sincere and tactful. "She's a handsome woman, and Jack is very much like her."

Nora looks up from the new baby's embroidered petticoat with a tiny frown between her straight young brows.

"In looks, perhaps; but his disposition is entirely different. He is so unselfish and reasonable; that is, when we are alone. When his mother comes to see us, he sometimes gets a little cranky and difficult."

A comprehending silence on my part. As a friend, it is my duty to sympathize with Nora's troubles, which I perceive to emanate from the regrettable fact that, when she married Jack, she did not wed an orphaned, only child. Since the beginning of civilization, perhaps since the dawn of history, count-

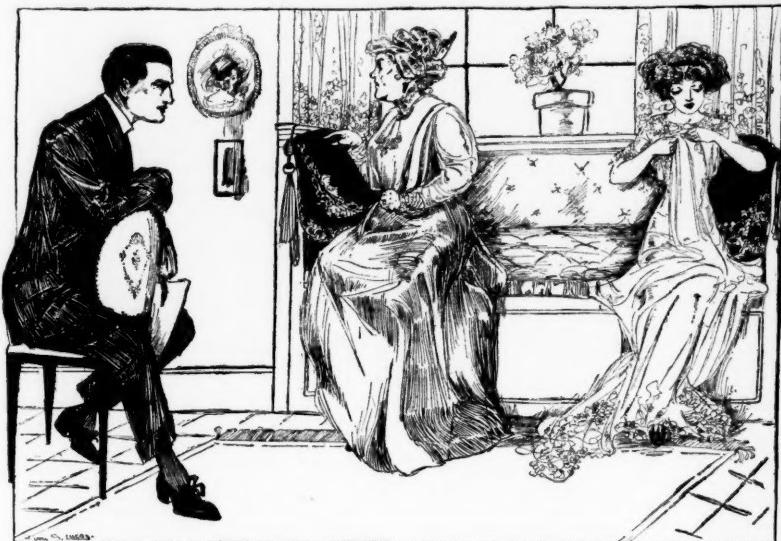
less men and women have grieved in secret that they were not thus favored by the gods.

Nora continues:

"Of course, Jack's mother is splendid. I wouldn't give you a false impression of her for the world. But, Mary, if I lived in the house with her, I know I should go mad! My dear, she thinks she *owns* Jack! I suppose she means to be nice to me; but, sometimes when we three are in the room together,

are alone, even the hardest run of work at the office never tires him so terribly."

"Poor Jack!" say I. But I refrain from uttering the obvious truth that Jack is exhausted, not because of his mother's visit, but because he is the one doomed to suffer most from the effect of that mysterious malady which I will here christen in-law-itis. Being a mere man, he does not know what the trouble is; but he endures an agony of discomfort, which is not less painful be-



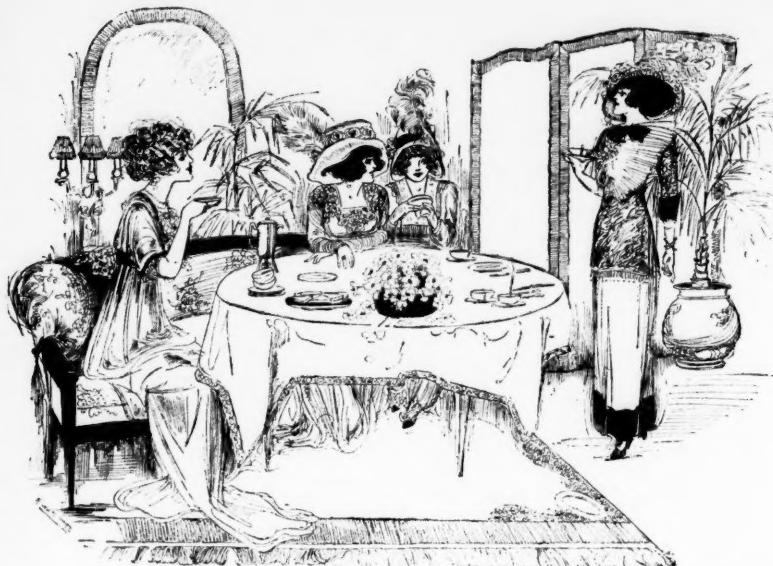
But, sometimes when we three are in the room together, I feel that I might disappear, and she wouldn't even notice.

I feel that I might suddenly disappear, like a mist or a perfectly good ghost, and she wouldn't even notice, Jack being still visible! And she can't understand, she can't seem to *remember*, that even with members of the family visiting them, husband and wife would like a little time alone together."

I say: "How does Jack take it?"

And Nora replies, with a slight, expressive shrug: "Of course, after all, he is his mother, and he loves her. But I notice that toward the end of her visits he is worn to a shred. When we

cause he does not attempt to analyze it. He is being torn asunder, brain and spirit, by the battling of those two women for sole possession of his personality. Neither wife nor mother would confess to the wretched little microbe recognizable as common jealousy; but the truth is that they meet on but one common ground—Jack; they have as yet found no other trysting place of sympathy or interest, and therefore, when they and their victim spend hours together in that fetish, the living room of the American home, an atmos-



"If Nora went out a little more, saw her own special cronies—"

sphere is created of such miasmic unhealth that the trio suffer from a sickness of the soul as racking as acute mal de mer.

I wonder sometimes whether this situation might not be avoided by a little discretion, more of tête-à-tête and less of tout ensemble. If Nora went out a little more, saw her own special cronies while Jack and his mother hobnobbed cozily at home; if, perhaps, she even paid that long-promised visit to her college friend, Millicent, leaving her mother-in-law to keep Jack company and order his house, there might be less friction, more good feeling, and a sense of larger possibilities for the future.

On the other hand, every mother-in-law who lives would become more attractive to her son's wife, her daughter's husband, if she recalled the golden days of her own young matronhood, her keen joy in possession, in being absolutely first in the heart of her husband.

Of course, grandchildren, while they add new complications to the situation, likewise help it immeasurably. The

most adoring wife may tire a little of hearing her husband's praises sung by his mother; for there is so often a hint of her own shortcomings in this impassioned pean. She soon suspects that generosity in a son degenerates into extravagances in a daughter-in-law, that whereas an "own" may be firm an in-law is obstinate. And how often an own is wisely economical, and an in-law plain stingy!

But the young mother rarely tires of hearing the grandparent expatiate on the baby's beauty, his brilliance of mind, his perennial charm, whether in his bath, his crib, or enthroned on the parental or patriarchal knee. To be sure, it is curious how inevitably the offspring's good points are inherited from Jack's branch of the family, in the estimation of Jack's mother, and how his weaknesses, from violent temper to homely features, come straight down from the other side of the house.

Complications continue to increase with the years. Grandparents and parents in our generation have diametri-

cally opposing theories concerning the child's religious training, his secular education, the treatment of his infantile ailments, his discipline, dentition, and diet. The gap between is that between the generations; and the only bridge is love of the child himself. Yet this love is sometimes a permanent cure for the malady of in-law-itis.

Yet there is alleviation, if not cure, in the establishment of a genuine, perhaps whimsical, tolerance of in-laws for each other. After all, the relation is arbitrary, artificial. Having loved one's own parents for twenty-five or thirty years, it is practically impossible to adopt as mother and father two mature, alien, finished products of humankind, however amiable, whom you or I have had no part or lot in developing and educating in the way we all serve to educate our real parents.

On the other hand, accepting as your own children those whom you have not loved and served from the cradle is an impossible feat. There may be a few self-deceptive parents who honestly believe "that my son's wife is as dear to me as my son"; theirs is a brave ideal-

ism, a noble loyalty, only nobody believes them. If now and then we see a close and beautiful bond of affection between two people related through marriage, we recognize that the love exists not because of the tie itself, but because of some deep-rooted sympathy, some kinship of the mind or spirit.

Usually that bold man or woman who aspires to marry one closely related to ourselves arouses our instinctive antagonism. Even when we know that Susan, whom our Thomas is courting, measures up to a far higher standard of character than his, the knowledge irritates us, colors our minds where Susan is concerned. Thomas may be a wastrel and a loafer; but Susan has no business to shine so golden by comparison, to appear such a model of industry and thrift. If Susan hesitates about marrying Thomas we are indignant. Of course, our boy has faults; but, then, so has Susan. Yet, if she marries him promptly because she obviously adores him, shortcomings and all, we are inclined to consider her a little lacking in delicacy, a little "anxious" to acquire that valuable asset—a husband. In



But the young mother rarely tires of hearing the grandparent expatiate on the baby's beauty.

short, we think, if we do not say, that Susan has angled craftily for Thomas, and landed him.

If, instead of settling down after marriage, Thomas shows a constitutional inability to stick to his job, to support Susan decently; if even a devoted and competent wife fails to make a man of Thomas, to develop in him power of self-control, a sense of responsibility, then the *raison d'être* is surely not our upbringing, but Susan's failure to inspire his best efforts.

Were Susan your daughter-in-law instead of mine, how different she would seem—to me—how patient, how loyal, how long-suffering! And, if Thomas were the son of other parents, how we would lament the parental sparing of that rod which long ago might have proved so marvelously efficacious!

On the whole, with a few signal exceptions, I believe that men as in-laws are more tolerant and less critical than women. Of course, one sees occasionally men jealous of their wives' parents; but, moss-grown jokes to the contrary, young husbands are often extremely fond and proud of their mothers-in-law. And even where the tie is less attractive, men are apt to recognize at the outset the futility of demanding affection as a right, or attempting to force their own inclinations in-law-ward.

But, then, it is undeniable that men

see less of their in-laws than women, which may account for their superior philosophy. The terrible nearness, the enforced intimacy of two women living under one roof, without love for each other, often develops a high degree of human tragedy.

If the women are busy, minds and hands occupied, the situation may be entirely possible, even where there exists little temperamental affinity. But where there is neither absorbing work nor native sympathy, even the delight in little children may not be sufficient to relieve the tension.

Of course, there are gentle and lovely saints whose every relation with life is harmonious. We may all have known a few such. But the rank and file of humanity are pathetically fallible as regards those omnipresent, indispensible, sometimes maligned, and oftentimes deplored, good people—our in-laws.

Yet, in our most intolerant moods, let us remember that if you and I bear our respective burdens, there are those who sigh over us, our sins of omission and commission, our density, our tactlessness, the way we wear our hair or our beard or our neckties, our failure to perform the masculine duty of bread-and-butter calls, or to fasten the feminine button and the yawning placket.

In short, if those trying persons are our lamented in-laws, we also are theirs.



Compromise in Kentucky

"You see, suh"—it was a genuine Blue Grass "colonel" speaking—"he was a cullud man, an' so, of co'se, Ah could not be expected to address him by 'Mis-tah.' On the uther hand, suh, he was principal of an industr'l school down our way, an' so Ah could not rightly speak to him by his given name. Ah tell you, suh, Ah shorely was put out what Ah should do—an' then, suh, it occurred to me to compromise, an' Ah did. Ah called him 'Professah.'"



Baron Mausenpfeffer

BY
JOHN D. SWAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY P. J. HOSFORD

THE weddings of James Weldon's six beautiful daughters formed a sequence of increasing splendor and expense, as was noted by those in their set. This was due, in part, to the "increased cost of living," and in part to the natural desire of each sister to outshine those who had preceded her on the matrimonial highway.

For many years, the Weldons had been familiar figures at resorts ranging from Paul Smith's to Palm Beach. Generations of vacationists had watched the girls blossom from barelegged, white-frocked romps into willowy debutantes; while the lean, alert little James Weldon skipped nimbly from conservatory to ballroom, from clam-bake to casino, hollow-eyed from loss of sleep, and solicitous as a hen with a brood of ducklings.

Mrs. Weldon having died when the eldest daughter was in her early teens, the father had assumed the responsibilities of chaperon to his interesting group. Having withdrawn from active business, and invested his comfortable fortune as advantageously as possible, he acquired all the skill and finesse of a matchmaking dowager. No anxious matron possessed a keener scent for gentlemen adventurers than he; and, while far too shrewd to issue direct

mandates, or even, save on rare occasions, to offer advice, he contrived, by a discreet process of elimination, to surround his daughters with groups of eligible young men.

This required considerable maneuvering. At times it necessitated precipitate retreat, when he led his tearful cohort from the proximity of some fascinating undesirables, and by a circuitous route to some new resort, the destination unknown to his daughters until they actually arrived. It required, also, a degree of espionage over the correspondence of the girls; a necessity as irksome to him as possible.

If the end justifies the means, Mr. James Weldon was able, at least, to point to the undoubted fact that there was nowhere to be found a set of finer young men than his six sons-in-law.

Immediately following the marriage of the sixth, Weldon took careful inventory of his affairs, and discovered that he was practically beggared. It requires but a flaccid imagination to realize the inroads that can be made upon a considerable estate by six growing girls during a period extending over a dozen years, mostly spent at fashionable summer and winter resorts, and followed by elaborate weddings and their incidental extravagances. Thousands

melted like small change; trousseaus destroyed their tens of thousands.

There remained, after the sixth and latest wedding, Albertine, the youngest and sole surviving member of his flock.

Nature, after lavishing upon Albertine's sisters every attribute of feminine beauty and blandishment, had failed dismally with her, known affectionately in the family as Cinderella. In an effort to make her cute and piquant, nature had bungled. Her nose was frankly upturned, rather than retroussé. Her eyes were humorous and twinkling, but also undeniably set too far apart. A couple of white teeth might be glimpsed beneath her short upper lip, which seemed to have been forcibly lifted by her soaring nose.

If I seem to have painted little Miss Albertine as positively ugly, I hasten to qualify. Her color was admirable, her hair light and abundant, her figure delicious. Indubitably, her disposition was better, her temper more generous, and her affections warmer than those of any of her stately sisters. Still, Mr. James Weldon's wide experience assured him that she was distinctly less marketable than they; a fact which oppressed him merely because he knew there remained of his fortune barely enough to permit him to settle down in the least expensive and best loved of his New York clubs, and devote himself to his secret passion, the collection of early English herbals, a corner of bibliomania not as yet overcrowded or expensive.

The difficulty would have been simplified but for a certain awkward pride of Albertine's, which caused her to refuse to live as the pensioner of her married sisters, all of whom were extremely fond of her, and anxious to welcome her as a member of their households, and who, as she perfectly well knew, would play the part of elder sister and guardian in its fullest and most aggravating sense. Therefore, she cheerfully preferred to cleave to her father, who knew well that his financial course was run.

It was at this crisis, which amateur writers delight to name the "psychological moment," that the Baron Hausen-

pfeffer made his delayed entrance. It was in the latter part of August, at a hotel on the Maine coast, considerably less expensive than the hosteries the Weldons had affected in the past; a hotel where a baron is as great a novelty as a pitcher of thick cream or a loin of tender beef.

He arrived quite unheralded, a monotone of yellowish brown, with waxed mustache, hair, goatee, and eyes of this undecisive color, and clad in a vague, brownish sack suit of homespun, with gloves, walking stick, and Bavarian hat to match.

The group of boarders who clustered about the register before his creaking tan shoes had ascended halfway to the first floor after the native who bore his Gladstone bag, discovered with stunned amaze that royalty—as their undiscriminating minds understood it—was in their midst. Suggestion, of course, is everything; and when, later, Baron Hausenpfeffer descended sadly to the six-o'clock dinner, they read into his every attitude the inbred distinction of long centuries of *savoir faire*.

With the almost subconscious skill of an old campaigner, Weldon contrived matters so that the baron was seated next to him at the end of the table, with a deaf old gentleman on his right, and Albertine opposite. Thus simply and effectively was the newcomer monopolized, to the unconcealed disgust of the less experienced boarders.

Albertine, who had been playing tennis all the afternoon, knew nothing of the new arrival until he was presented to her at table by her father; and, as she failed to catch his name, was merely conscious of a quiet, rather melancholy stranger, whom she set out to make "feel at home" with her unfailing kindness of heart. That her efforts were entirely distorted by the malicious guests at their table is not less certain than that she quite captivated the baron, who, under her gentle stimulus, responded with what was, for him, surprising loquacity.

As the deaf old gentleman was quite out of the running, and the almost hysterical women seated below the Wel-

dons could not contrive to force themselves to the front, it was not unnatural that the baron should rise from dinner to attach himself to his new acquaintances. Of course, Albertine presented him to such of the others as were obviously waiting about; but the mischief had been done, and Mr. James Weldon soon retired to the cardroom for his evening rubber, with the virtuous feeling that he had done his duty.

That the baron would actually fall in

latest bell hop, was aware of the state of affairs before he awoke with a start.

Baron Hausenpfeffer, a gentle, retiring soul, warmed into quite a passionate admirer in the rays of Albertine's kindly regard. It is probable that, had she understood his title when introduced by her father, her natural pride would have caused her to stiffen and retire into herself. As it was, they were already congenial acquaintances when dinner ended, and by ten o'clock she had learned and



The lean, alert little James Weldon skipped nimbly from conservatory to ballroom, as solicitous as a hen with a brood of ducklings.

love with his last daughter, and in a surprisingly short time, did not occur to him as even remotely probable; his maneuvers having been, as I have said, virtually subconscious. Had he anticipated this, he would certainly have made careful investigation of the titled visitor's pedigree. And yet exactly this thing occurred; but so accustomed had Weldon become to seeing Albertine a general favorite without ever attracting the particular attentions of any man, that practically every one in the hotel, from the deaf old gentleman to the

forgotten that he was a baron, and was eagerly discussing Debussy with him before the open fire, which combated the chill Maine fog which set in by sundown.

Once convinced that Baron Hausenpfeffer was becoming infatuated with his daughter, Weldon set to work with all his old skill. Without demeaning himself by seeking any direct information from the rocking-chair fraternity, he rapidly placed himself in possession of the salient features. Nothing ominous confronted him save the basic fact



It was at this crisis that the Baron Hausenpfeffer made his delayed entrance.

of the baron's attitude. Albertine, it was evident to his ripe judgment, was, as yet, heart-free, although obviously more interested than usual. There was no evidence of clandestine meetings or stolen interviews, and Weldon reposed sufficient confidence in Albertine to be satisfied that lack of evidence was conclusive. Having outlined the situation thus, he proceeded to sound the baron.

At once he came up against a wall which all his finesse was unable to surmount. The situation was not lacking in delicacy. He could not assume that the baron was his daughter's lover, and inquire as to his "intentions" in traditional manner. Nor could he, without impertinence, inquire directly as to his family and prospects. Thrown thus upon the necessity of an indirect and circuitous attack, he found the subject of his attempted investigation politely inscrutable, and frankly noncommunicative. There remained then merely the resource of silent scrutiny. Weldon gave himself over conscientiously to a patient and minute investigation, which

his keen knowledge of human nature well fitted him to conduct.

With a subtlety which aroused no suspicions among the other guests, he contrived to see much of Baron Hausenpfeffer at all hours of the day. Wherever the baron went, there he found Mr. James Weldon, who seemed to read his intentions with uncanny prescience. He encouraged Albertine to talk of him, but never introduced him as a conversational theme. And the more he investigated, the farther he seemed from any definite conclusion. The baron was unquestionably conversant with social amenities. The little acts characteristic of gentle breeding seemed instinctive with him. He was the only man at the hotel who invariably rose when a belated feminine diner took her place at table. His voice was low-pitched and almost deferential, his attitude as a listener singularly attentive, his language, if somewhat colorless, faultlessly correct.

In dress he was quiet and almost somber. He rigidly donned evening

clothes at six, whereas the other men never did save on Saturday nights, when dinner was followed by the weekly hop, at which festive occasion lantern-bearing recruits from the cottages came seeking, if not honest men, at least dancing men.

It seemed to Weldon, after observing the baron for three days, that there was no subject on which he was at a loss to converse intelligently, if not inspiringly. It was Albertine who did most of the talking, touching lightly upon the latest operas, novels, dramas, and even modes in clothes; while the baron from time to time interjected a phrase or two which proved that he was following her attentively and with entire comprehension. In short, he acted, to speak in terms of vaudeville, as "feeder" for Albertine, than which there are few rôles calling for more subtle and unobtrusive tact.

Still, to the listening ear of James Weldon, it seemed that whenever Baron Hausenpfesser committed himself to a direct statement, he appeared to be quoting the views of some one else. He impressed him as a sober, unimaginative man with a reliable memory, rather than as a pioneer in aesthetics. Most of the subjects under discussion were beyond the range of Weldon's critical knowledge. He could merely judge of the soundness of the baron's views by their effect on Albertine.

Occasionally, however, it befell him to see the baron alone. At such times, the latter evinced a fairly intelligent acquaintance with politics and finance; the sort of interest, Weldon judged, that one might expect in a man of independent income not actively engaged in business.

He overheard him conversing fluently in German with the hotel barber, and in French with a Canadian hostler. Weldon's knowledge of these tongues was not sufficient to enable him to judge whether the baron was as correct as fluent; but he deprecatingly admitted to Weldon that he had a speaking acquaintance with three or four others, including Russian and Czech.

Weldon's knowledge of the Continent

was limited to a couple of trips down the Rhine, followed by summers in Switzerland, and frequent visits to the great capitals. He discovered that Baron Hausenpfesser's knowledge soon drew him beyond his depth; but one significant fact rewarded his angling. The baron was certainly familiar with half a dozen or more of the sort of hotels and cafés known to Weldon, where no man stops unless he is at least prosperous. Weldon assured himself that the baron knew these places better than he; and Weldon knew them much better than his daughter knew the galleries and churches dear to tourists.

Baron Hausenpfesser, in fact, without being in any sense a gourmand, was extremely meticulous about the little details of the table. The most amiable of men, almost the only evidence of temper he ever displayed was directed toward the blowsy Maine schoolmistresses who waited at table. He was forever reprimanding them with curt impatience for fetching him cold plates, greasy forks, eggs broken from the shell, or empty saltcellars. Yet his tips were so liberal as to scandalize the other guests, and win from the waitresses an eager and obsequious service.

Here Mr. James Weldon's observations came to an abrupt ending. He was obliged ruefully to admit that, beyond them, he knew no more of Baron Hausenpfesser than on the day when he arrived. By chance, the latter had remarked that he had been advised to try the Maine air for insomnia. Was it possible that, knowing of the happy estate of Weldon's six daughters, he had come adventuring for the seventh and last, under the mistaken idea that Weldon was a wealthy man?

Weldon offset this possibility by confessing frankly to the baron, one day when they chanced to be alone, that his fortune was exhausted. The baron responded by cordially offering to loan him as much as he chose, to invest in the Street, the baron to receive half the profits as interest. This turned the tables neatly on Weldon.

Meanwhile, his uneasy fears for Albertine increased. He plainly perceived

that the unwavering devotion of Baron Hausenpfeffer was not without effect. Cinderella was falling in love with the Fairy Prince—because the Fairy Prince was so very obviously in love with Cinderella.

It occurred to Weldon as a horrible possibility that he might bring his exploits to a wretched culmination by ruining the life of his sole remaining child. Poor little Albertine! Most sensitive of his daughters, the one least able to defend herself, and the one for whom he could financially do the least. Greatly as he would have welcomed an alliance between her and Baron Hausenpfeffer, were he certain of the latter's worth, he could not convince himself of this. Meanwhile, were he to delay much longer, he felt that matters would get entirely out of hand, and Albertine's affections be hopelessly compromised.

In his plight, he decided to do what he never before had been under the necessity of. He sent for a Pinkerton operative, chagrined at his inability to read the baron's character himself.

The day he wrote to the Boston Pinkerton Agency, he casually remarked to Albertine at table that a business acquaintance of his was coming on in a day or so to advise with him regarding an important investment. He easily justified himself for this circumlocution as being virtually true; and he secured the eviction of the deaf old gentleman in order that the operative might have full opportunity to study Baron Hausenpfeffer. In all such details, he was the capable James Weldon of old;

it was merely his inability to pierce the baron's reticence that thwarted him.

In due time, Mr. Richard Barnes, an agreeable, medium-sized, smooth-shaven young man, clad in blue serge, arrived; the sort of man you might jostle fifty times a week in hotel lobbies and never recall having seen before.

He obtained from Weldon an outline of the case, asked three or four questions, was presented to Albertine and the baron at dinner, and appeared to be a rather stupid young man, with an unusual appetite.

But, then, people always eat outrageously upon first arriving on the Maine coast. He rather ignored the baron, talked stocks half-heartedly with Weldon, and openly admired Albertine with the idea of drawing Baron Hausenpfeffer out.

At the close of his second day, Weldon asked him what opinion he had reached.

"It's this way," said Barnes, after assuring himself that they were alone. "I have seen the baron somewhere, but have not yet been able to place him. You see, I carry from twelve to fifteen hundred faces in what I might call my mental Rogues' Gallery; and, except in the case of a few hundred notorious criminals, it takes time to identify any particular one."

Weldon expressed some surprise at the statement.

"Oh, that's nothing." Barnes modestly assured him. "The old man carries between five and six thousand portraits in *his* gallery; but he was in the game before I was born."



In due time, Mr. Richard Barnes arrived.

"And you feel sure you can recall him in time?" Weldon anxiously inquired.

"I am bound to," Barnes insisted. "It's only a question of time, as I say. Sooner or later a remark, an attitude, perhaps a single word, will give me my clew. After that, the affair will be closed up in short order. Once I find who he is, we can give you his life history from the day he learned to walk."

With this, Weldon was fain to be content. As for Barnes, being a conscientious operative, he worked much harder than he seemed to. Besides managing to keep Baron Hausenpfeffer under almost constant espionage without arousing suspicion on the part of himself or any guest—by no means a simple task in a gossipy little coast hotel—he devoted from one to two hours each day racking his brains in the effort to isolate his quarry from the jumble of faces he had familiarized himself with in every quarter of the globe.

When, however, he felt the first indication of brain fag, he was wise enough to drop the entire affair from his mind; and it was on such occasions, or when Baron Hausenpfeffer was on a picnic or sailing party which he could not invent any excuse for joining, that he enjoyed himself very much as any other normal young man would do, even indulging in a discreet flirtation with one of the myriad blond maidens with black velvet filets and fluffy white gowns who seem born to inhabit summer hotels.

At these times, Mr. James Weldon was occasionally unjust enough to suspect his employee of indolence and lack of enterprise. The fact that he was paying for his services a daily sum about equal to his own weekly expenses was largely responsible for these pessimistic moods, coupled with his anxiety that Albertine be saved from a possible adventurer, and at the same time lose no opportunity of making a congenial and desirable marriage.

There was also an admixture of personal pride, as he was not at all unaware of his rather unusual series of alliances, and had no notion whatever

of making a fool of himself at the last, being shrewd enough to realize that his world would remember him for one failure rather than for half a dozen conspicuous triumphs.

Altogether, these were long days and longer nights to Weldon; and even Albertine, now frankly according to Baron Hausenpfeffer the place of an admirer, commented on her father's generally peaked appearance and new acerbity of disposition. The guests, of course, arrived at divers conclusions, and threshed the affair over on the piazzas.

Then, very suddenly, a week after the arrival of Barnes, the spectacular climax took place in the smoking room.

Weldon, Baron Hausenpfeffer, Barnes, and half a dozen others, were indulging in the blameless ginger ale of the Pine Tree State; and Barnes was watching the baron, who seemed to be in a brown study, and had left his glass untasted on the arm of his chair. Suddenly, in a lull of conversation, Barnes uttered a sharp hiss. Every one glanced at him in surprise—every one, that is, save Baron Hausenpfeffer, who rose to his feet with alacrity, and, answering the lifted finger of Barnes, walked noiselessly to his side, rubbing his palms together, head attentively bent.

The others gazed, open-mouthed, while Barnes looked briskly up, re-marking:

"Rudolph, I wish a simple little, cold luncheon to-day. What can you suggest?"

"A cup of cold bouillon, sir, and some timbales of Virginia ham in aspic, or possibly a cold game pasty, with a bit of Macedoine salad, a sauterne cup and—"

Suddenly the baron paused, gazed at the smiling face of Barnes in frozen horror, straightened up with a jerk, blinked his eyes rapidly, like one awakening from a trance, and, uttering a strange and heartrending squawk, turned, and fled from the room without even pausing to secure his hat.

Later, I believe, he sent a check for



"Rudolph, I wish a simple little, cold luncheon to-day. What can you suggest?"

his hotel charges, and had his luggage forwarded; but he was seen no more.

"I blame myself," Barnes confided to Weldon as soon as they could retire to the latter's room. "I did the one thing the old man never forgives us for doing; I undertook the case with a pre-conceived theory. Because the baron's face was vaguely familiar to me, I jumped to the conclusion that he was a suspicious character; a member of the fraternity of confidence men, or something of the sort. This probably delayed me a day or so in isolating him, although it did not change the actual result, of course."

"Well, wasn't he?" demanded Weldon.

"There is nothing against the man, I believe," declared Barnes.

"He is a waiter, and he had the nerve to masquerade as a baron and make love to my daughter!" stormed Weldon. "If that isn't a sort of confidence game, I'd like to know why not."

"But, you see, being a waiter probably does not loom in his eyes as a

disgrace; and, as for his masquerading, even that is susceptible of an explanation."

"Do you mean to tell me his name actually is Baron Hausenpfeffer?"

"Hausenpfeffer, no. I confess I am even yet undecided as to whether his choice of this name indicates a sense of humor or an utter lack of it. But baron—well, you know barons are as plentiful in Germany as huckleberries in Maine. His father was, I thoroughly believe, a baron; and a very poor specimen. At any rate, when the baroness died, he drank up what was left of the ancestral fortune, which was not much, I fancy; and Rudolph, as I knew him, was turned out to shift for himself. He was a mere lad, and he drifted to Paris, becoming assistant to a waiter in some café there; *chasseurs* they call them, I believe; the little chaps who set up the table, fill your water glass, et cetera; leading a devil of a life until they are, if intelligent enough, promoted to be waiters themselves. Rudolph was observant and adaptive, and graduated

at quite an early age. His subsequent career was like that of other cosmopolitan waiters; except that, being more intelligent than the average, his opportunities were greater."

"All this may be true," agreed Weldon, still unmollified; "but what right had he to pass himself off as an educated man?"

"I suppose, in a way of speaking, he is an educated man," persisted Barnes. "The mere fact that he did not get his knowledge from books has nothing to do with it. He traveled extensively, he kept his eyes and ears open, he served in the best hotels and cafés of the world; and he was constantly within earshot of clever people—travelers, playwrights, musicians, authors, critics, financiers. Did you ever stop to think how very much a man so circumstanced must subconsciously absorb, even when he is assiduously serving a dinner? French scientists record the case of an ignorant peasant woman who thus acquired a knowledge of Sanscrit, which her master was accustomed to read aloud as he paced up and down before the window where she stood starching his linen. Besides, Rudolph was never a dissipated man. He read a good deal, and he visited museums, concerts, and galleries of a Sunday. But your observation that all his opinions seemed to lack originality is a just one."

"I do not understand how you, who an hour ago did not even know who this Rudolph was, can now furnish a

circumstantial account of his life," objected Weldon.

"Easily enough," Barnes assured him. "As I expected, a mere trifle, an unconscious pose, in fact, identified him for me. As I told you, I had been expecting to unmask an adventurer. I merely discovered an attentive ex-waiter, who has served me two or three times in Flaubert's. As for his history, you may read it for yourself in the Sunday papers dated some time last May. The notoriety it brought him undoubtedly accounts for his traveling incog."

Weldon shook his head uncomprehendingly.

"So long as there was nothing disgraceful in his story, I cannot see why a waiter should object to notoriety."

"Yes," smiled Barnes; "but he is really a somewhat remarkable man. And he is not a waiter—he is an ex-waiter, which is quite a different matter. I believe he is to return to Germany and assume the social status to which he is, by birth, entitled. You see, the crux of the story is this: His accumulations in tips, invested under the advice of some of his broker patrons, amount to two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars odd; a large sum for a German who has no one dependent upon him."

The ensuing crash which startled young Barnes was caused by the collapse of Mr. James Weldon, who demolished a hotel rocker beyond hope of repair.



Father's Hand

By Robert Rudd Whiting



I wished I had a cowboy hat to wear,
I wished I had a bowie knife and gun.
I tell you what, I'd just have heaps of fun
A-huntin' the ferocious grizzly bear,
And a-follerin' the wild-cat to his lair.
You can bet I'd make the Injuns up and run.
Yes, even if they had me ten to one.
With my trusty gun and knife I wouldn't care.
I'd start this very minute on my quest
If I only had a gun and cowboy hat.
Still they say it's awful far—"away out west."
And if father ever found where I was at—
With my gun and knife I wouldn't mind the rest.
But father's hand is awful hard and flat!





THE MIRACLE AT WEST CROSS CORNERS

By
Augusta
Huiell
Seaman

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BUNKER

MIRACLES and Henrietta Miniver would seem entirely incompatible, yet they were, under the circumstances, strangely allied. And the manner of their association came about in this wise: Dissension and strife ran riot in the choir of the little church at West Cross Corners. Never had that harmonious organization been so rent in twain. As was to be expected, the seeds of disturbance had been sown by an alien and an outsider. Hadassah Van Horn lingered on the outskirts of the excited group after choir rehearsal on Friday night, and listened to the heated arguments without taking part.

"Tain't no worse than it ever was," timidly asserted Al Sutzen, the tenor; "an' we've always thought it pretty good."

"Well, I don't care what you always thought. The whole of it is, I ain't going to be soprano in this choir, 'n' try to sing against that racket, so there!"

Henrietta Miniver launched her ultimatum with all the assurance of an

"arrived" prima donna. Beside that, being the pastor's niece added force to her opinions. She had only recently come from Philadelphia, and if she was pert, it was forgiven because she was also urban. As she had once taken sixteen vocal lessons toward the improvement of a naturally shrill soprano voice—the improvement was not yet apparent—the choir of the town sanctuary deemed itself fortunate in annexing this "trained" soloist. But it had not counted on Henrietta's belligerent powers.

No sooner was she installed in this musical circle than she commenced a bitter and unceasing warfare against the doubtfully melodious assistance of Jim Clayton's cornet. Now, Jim's cornet was West Cross Corners' secret pride and joy. No other village for miles around could boast a similar adjunct to its church music. West Cross Corners felt itself to be unique. Therefore, it had seemed something little short of sacrilegious when Henrietta had first inveighed against it.

But, like all causes that ever were

propagated, Henrietta's soon gained to itself supporters. Mrs. McKim, who played the little parlor organ, and hitherto chief soprano, shortly joined the enemy's ranks. Timid Mrs. Bromley, whose feeble alto scarcely ever became audible, declared that "he drownded her out completely, and she couldn't hear herself think when he got agoin'!"

The tenors and basses were solid in their support of Jim, perhaps because he was of their own sex, and needed champions; perhaps, also, because there were times when they were not unwilling that their uncertain warblings should be "drownded out."

Only Hadassah Van Horn was absolutely neutral, refusing to annex herself to either cause. This was set down to Hadassah's always having hated a quarrel.

And Jim went his way in blissful unconsciousness. Not one among them would have been hired to announce to him the diversity of sentiment. His cornet had long been the sole pride and pleasure of his solitary, comfortless, middle-aged existence. He firmly believed that the foundations of West Cross Corners church, as an organization, would be undermined, were his musical support eliminated from the services. Therefore, who should undeceive him?

"Supposin' we decided to get along without Brother Clayton," questioned Mrs. McKim. "How'd we let him know? He's been playin' here for more'n twenty years. I'd hate to be the one to tell him. I jest wouldn't do it!"

Each middle-aged member of the choir shook a head in prompt negative, and glanced involuntarily at the door through which Jim had disappeared. Henrietta alone was unimpressed.

"Well, something's got to be done, or you can take your choice between Jim Clayton and *me!*"

And Henrietta left the group to flounder its way, as best it could, out of the pretty pickle into which she had plunged it. The remaining members eyed each other, with shrugging shoulders and half-audible "Well, I never's,"

open criticism of the minister's niece constituting something analogous to high treason.

"I got bread to set," finally declared Mrs. Bromley, "an' I got to be movin'!"

And, without further discussion, the group melted away.

On Sundays, Jim Clayton's time was amply occupied. That day he laid aside his toilsome fisherman's existence, and devoted himself to an arduous observance of the Sabbath. Rising and break-fasting early, he smoked two successive pipes, laboriously read aloud a chapter in the Bible, and furbished up his one decent suit of clothes. The remaining time he devoted to polishing and practicing on his cornet.

First he went over each part tenderly, lovingly, with an old piece of chamois, breathing on the more obstinate blemishes. Then he reviewed methodically each hymn for the day. He closed this season of practice always with his own particular favorite:

"Blest be-e the tie that binds!"

Taking his cornet case and hat, when the clock struck ten, he would trudge to the little white church down the road, to ring the first bell. When this was accomplished, he deposited his cornet case under his chair in the choir space, and disappeared into a little back room.

Here it was, half an hour before the regular service, that the "preliminary meeting" was held, attended by the elect few, the *crème de la crème* of West Cross Corners' piety. When this function was over, he rang the last bell with clamoring strokes that shook the little meetinghouse to its foundations, and, stepping front softly, assumed his seat at the extreme right of the choir space.

It was the Sunday after the stormy choir session on Friday night. Jim, having been unusually elevated by the spirit of the "preliminary meeting," sat in the choir, musing, for some moments before opening the case of his instrument.

Directly behind him sat Henrietta Miniver, in a gown whose style the local dressmakers had striven madly—

and in vain—to copy. She likewise had a new and Philadelphian quirk to her coiffure, and she whispered about it intermittently to her neighbors, Mrs. Bromley and Hadassah.

The tenors and basses had ranged themselves along the wall at the back, and shuffled their hymn books self-consciously. Mrs. McKim settled herself at the organ, adjusted her hat, flicked her nose with a much-be-laced handkerchief, rearranged the plated gold bracelets on her fat wrists, and spread her hymn book on the rack.

Then Jim woke to the affairs of the moment. Reaching under his chair, he drew out his cornet case, laid it on his knee, and opened it. Suddenly the Sabbath stillness was broken by a loud clatter. Jim had risen in his seat and dropped the case to the floor. His tanned face had the expression of a startled hare.

"It's empty!" he said aloud, and wonderingly.

In the dusky, starlit silence of a July night, Hadassah Van Horn and Henrietta Miniver were sauntering home from a little evening gathering of a sociable nature, at Mrs. McKim's. Evening affairs at West Cross Corners were, as a rule, limited to female attendance. The sterner sex was usually engaged in anchoring eel pots, setting the night nets, or "jacking" for eels at the Inlet. Circumstances afforded it little opportunity to indulge in the social amenities of the village life. Henrietta and Hadassah both lived at the same end of the town, so they pursued their homeward way together.

"There's a light in Jim Clayton's window!" remarked Henrietta, with languid interest. "Wonder what he's doing home this time of night?"

"He must have got home early," answered Hadassah, quickening her pace.

Any mention of Jim was painful to her. She had never yet rid her memory of the heartbreaking expression in his face on the Sunday of the cornet's disappearance. Jim Clayton had been a changed and broken man since then. He still sat in his accustomed place in the choir with idle hands and listless, hanging head, refusing all condolence, speaking almost never—a spectacle pitiful to the most callous.

Furthermore, the disappearance had never been explained. All had been shocked and astonished—even Henrietta Miniver. All had assisted in a thorough search, but to no purpose. Then the nine days' wonder simmered down, recalled occasionally only by Jim's abjectness, and the absence of a cornet accompaniment on Sundays.

The two women were approaching the rickety gate.



"It's empty!" he said aloud, and wonderingly.

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"Ain't it the most tumble-down hole!" whispered Henrietta. "I should think he'd be ashamed to live like that!"

Hadassah did not answer, and they were passing on, when a groan and a faint ejaculation sounding like "Oh, Lord!" caused them both to stop and clutch each other's hands.

"Did you hear that? D'you suppose he's sick?"

"I don't know," faltered Hadassah. "Let's go and look in. Mebbe he's hurt!"

Together they tiptoed up the path, reached the porch, and peered in through the uncurtained window. So they stood a moment; then, with hot faces, their eyes met.

The room was lighted by one untended, smoky lamp that revealed the details of the scant and huddled furnishings in all their unlovely disarray. A small table pushed into a corner overflowed with dirty pans and dishes. A heap of mended nets occupied the middle of the floor. A suit of oilskins was thrown over the one chair, and a pair of huge rubber hip boots decorated the mantel. Everywhere reigned squalor, neglect, and dirt.

Only on its shelf, set apart, clean and sacred, lay the great Bible, surmounted by the empty cornet case. Near a frowsy couch in the corner knelt Jim Clayton, his hands clasped before him, his eyes tightly closed, swaying back and forth in the intensity of his emotion.

"Oh, Lord!" he prayed, "You took away the only thing I cared about, but I ain't complainin' no more'n Job did! I don't know what I done, Lord, but You've seen fit to chastise me more'n once in my life. The other time I bowed to Thy will, for I wasn't fit to tie her shoe strings, anyway. But this time I thought I was servin' Thee the best I could with the cornet. Mebbe I was gettin' to care too much about it, an' puttin' it before Thee. Mebbe You



"Oh, Lord!" he prayed, "You took away the only thing I cared about."

jest meant to try my faith. Lord, I do believe in miracles! I got as much faith as a grain of mustard seed. The age of miracles ain't dead yet. Lord, show me one! Show me one! I ain't got nothin' else in life I care about."

He rose from his knees, still praying, and blindly, fumblingly, reached for the cornet case. With an indrawn breath that was almost a sob, the two women turned hastily from the window and fled away in the darkness.

The full moon was rising behind the pine woods when Jim piled the last of his wire eel pots on the stern seat of his boat, pushed off, and shot out from shore under the impetus of his short, powerful strokes. Over in the west the curtain of crimson was paling in the brief September twilight, and the warm breeze came to him laden with resinous balm. At intervals of a few yards he stopped to throw over an eel pot, which disappeared with a tinkling splash.

Down toward the Inlet he rowed, his pile of eel pots steadily decreasing, till at length the last one was anchored. Then he turned the prow about, filled and lit his pipe, and paddled leisurely homeward, giving himself up to the pleasant spell of the twilight.

For Jim was at peace with the world. His happiness was so astonishing that he had not yet ceased to wonder at it—at times even to doubt it. The miracle had happened! His faith was vindicated! Night after night he had prayed for its fulfillment, night after night he had opened the case trustingly—and in vain. And then, *one* night, when faith was waxing very low, and hope had all but died within him, lo, the miracle was accomplished, the desire of his heart lay there before him in all its former beauty!

His childlike belief asked nothing, questioned nothing, sought not to explain. The Lord had answered his prayer; that was enough. West Cross Corners was electrified by the notes of the lost cornet on the following Sunday, and had ceased not to wonder and surmise. Miracles had been rare in that vicinity, the present being the first and only instance on record, and popular feeling was stirred to its depth.

The weekly prayer meetings were crowded with enthusiastic participants, and it was rumored that old, blind Joe Hopkins was praying for the return of his sight, and Hank MacCallum had bethought himself of interesting the Almighty in a dory that had been stolen from him some two years before. A passion for miracles had seized upon West Cross Corners.

Jim had, besides, a minor cause for gratitude. Henrietta Miniver had resigned from the choir, having accepted a position in the Presbyterian Church of Metacomet, where she was to receive the princely sum of fifty dollars a year for her services. Jim had frequently been conscious of a secret hostility in Henrietta's attitude toward him. While unaware of its reason, it caused him, nevertheless, a vague discomfort. Besides, he had never approved of her voice. Mrs. McKim

roared such a satisfying soprano—something against which he could pit the strength of his cornet. He was delighted to have Mrs. McKim again in the lead. Jim was at peace with the world!

The oars dripped as with molten silver. The woods hummed with a subdued chorus of crickets. To his ears was borne the boom of the distant surf. Near the shore, he stopped to inspect the contents of a huge crab car, and he dropped a few "shedders" into a basket in the boat.

When the prow grated softly on the shore, he sprang out, threw down his anchor, and trod it into the sand before he noticed the figure that rose from a pile of nets and came toward him.

"Hadassah!" he ejaculated, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Yes, it's me, Jim," she faltered, the nervous tension in her voice causing her tones to rise and fall uncertainly, "an' I don't blame you for bein' surprised. But I had to see you about somethin'!"

"Had to see me?" questioned the startled man. "It's a long day since you an' me had anything special to say to each other."

"Yes, Jim!" she acquiesced again. "But there's somethin' layin' heavy on my conscience, an' I won't have no peace till it's told. I knew you'd be comin' in from settin' eel pots to-night, so I come here."

Jim Clayton was too confused to offer any comment. He remained facing her stiffly, and she continued to speak in a low, monotonous key.

"It's about your cornet, Jim, an' the—the miracle. Ever since you got it back, you've been tellin' in prayer meetin' how the Lord performed a miracle, how the age of miracles ain't dead yet, how nothin' but a miracle could have restored it to you. Jim, I can't stand it no longer! There wasn't no miracle! I put it there myself!"

Her voice still held to the same monotonous key, but she made the final statement slowly and distinctly. Then

she stopped short. Too stunned at the sudden undermining of his simple faith to adjust himself to any speech, Jim struggled with his chaotic thoughts in silence. Hadassah drew a long breath of relief. The worst was over—the plunge had been taken. In a calmer voice she continued her explanation.

"I've got to tell you the hull story, an' it's goin' to hurt you some, I'm afraid, Jim, but you mustn't mind now, for everything's all right—all but the miracle. Henrietta Miniver didn't like your cornet in the choir, an' she made a big fuss about it, unknown to you. Then, one Sunday your cornet disappeared, an' we all thought some one had stolen it, same as you did. Well, one night Henrietta an' me was goin' home from a little party at Mrs. McKim's, an' when we was passin' your house we heard a groanin', an' we went an' peaked in the window, thinkin' you might be sick or somethin'. We saw you on your knees, an' heard you prayin' for the miracle, an' saw you reach for the case; an' we just couldn't stand it another minute, but ran off as quick as we could!"

Hadassah's voice faltered again, for the revelation of her spying on the man's devotions had been difficult. But Jim still made no effort to speak, and she once more took up the thread of her confession.

"Before we got to my house that night, Henrietta had a spell of conscience. She told me she had slipped into church that Sunday mornin' during 'preliminary meeting,' hid your cornet under her coat, an' run off with it. She said she did it partly for sheer devilment, and partly because she couldn't stand hearin' it any more. Later on, she went one day an' pushed it way under a pile of old, worn-out fish nets in your woodshed. She said she knew she was goin' to sing in some other church soon, an' she hoped the cornet would stay hidden till she did. She said she never dreamed you'd take it so hard. Then I told her she ought to tell you about it, for you'd probably never find it there, an' she said she wouldn't do that for a thousand dol-

lars, that she'd done enough in telling me."

"Well, I couldn't see you sufferin', an' think of you prayin' an' prayin' for a miracle when it was in my power to answer your prayer, an' no more could I go an' tell you about Henrietta—it didn't seem fair to her. So one day I went an' got the cornet when you was away to Bay Beach. I polished it up—it was dreadful tarnished—an' that night I went an' put it in the case when you was out. I never thought you'd get the hull town stirred up over its bein' a miracle. That's all," she ended simply.

For a moment there was a silence, punctuated only by the whispering of the pines, and the "chop-chop" of the water against the stern of the boat. Then Jim spoke:

"Let's sit down a moment, Hadassah. I got to think this out. I'm all confused, somehow. You don't mind, do you?"

For answer, Hadassah seated herself on the pile of nets, and Jim placed himself in the prow of his boat, and relit his pipe.

"I can think clearer if I smoke," he said half apologetically.

It was a strangely quiet group, touched by the magic moonlight with a rude romance. The man was struggling with the wreck of his beliefs, the woman with something more elemental. The unusualness of the meeting, the mystery and glamour of the night, the poignant pity for the man before her, helped to awake and rekindle a passion she had long considered dormant, even dead. She contemplated its resurgence with a vague terror. Must she, then, in middle life, renew the struggle by which she had fought and conquered years ago? At last Jim removed his pipe, knocked the ashes from it, and came over to where she sat.

"Hadassah, you're a good woman. I ain't sayin' but what this has knocked me up a bit, but you did right—you did right to tell me."

He stopped a moment, and looked out across the river. The spell of the moonlight was upon him, also.



"It's a long day since you an' me had anything special to say to each other."

"Twenty years ago, Hadassah, I asked you to marry me, an' you refused. I don't blame you at all, for I wasn't never worth your while, but it sort of took the heart out of me for good. I wasn't never able to make much out of my life, for I never stopped carin' for you. Nothin' else but religion ever seemed enough worth while. There ain't never been no call to tell you this again, for I knew you never changed your mind, an' there wasn't no opportunity, anyhow. But, somehow, to-night I jest couldn't keep from lettin' you know I ain't never changed. If it offends you to hear it, Hadassah, jest put it down to my bein'

all knocked up about the other thing—an' forgive me."

He laid his rough hand for one moment on hers, and she shook like a leaf. But she answered quietly enough:

"Jim, I was a foolish, scatter-brained girl, whose head had been turned by too much attention, when you asked me, an' I didn't know my own mind. Long after, when I came to my senses, I knew you were the only man I'd ever really cared for, but it was too late then. You never asked me again, an' I spent all these years tryin' to forget it. I thought I had it all safely buried, till this trouble came up, an'—an' the night I saw you inside your house I thought

my heart 'u'd break! I'm not ashamed to tell you, Jim, since you've spoke as you have."

The shock of this last revelation completely unnerved the man, and, to hide his agitation, he walked away from her abruptly, and stood staring out at the tide. Presently, feeling her hand upon his arm, he turned.

"Hadassah!"

"Jim!"

And the moonlight fell upon them with the touch of a silver benediction.

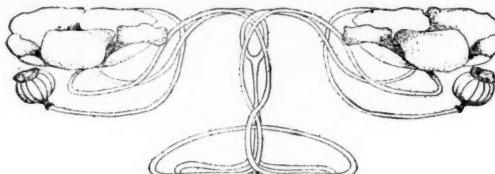
When Jim Clayton returned to his untidy little cabin that night his mental processes were still chaotic, though distinctly pleasurable. But, on lighting the smoky lamp, his eye fell first of all on the cornet case, and his brow puckered unhappily in a puzzled frown.

From long habit, however, he took it down, seated himself by the window, and reverently polished the instrument with the bit of chamois. After that he sat and regarded it thoughtfully for half an hour, trying to adjust his shattered belief with his new happiness. How should he explain this state of affairs to West Cross Corners? But all at once light broke.

"Why," he spoke aloud, "the age of miracles ain't dead yet! I thought the Lord had performed one, but I was mistaken. It was only a forerunner of His mercy. The miracle's what happened to-night!"

He put the cornet to his mouth, and blew a few preliminary notes. Then, with his whole soul in his lips, he launched forth into his favorite with a new and tenderer meaning:

"Blest be-e the ti-ie that binds!"



Twilight

WAN evening mist and shadow-blue of sky,
Save in the west, that with the day's last kiss
Still throbs in fire. Ah, such a day as this
Were far too rare, too glad, too sweet to die!

Lost jewels from the fingers of the night
Gleam on the grass and flower-foreheads hung
In drowsy wise. The silent moon among
Her waking stars climbs slowly tow'rd the height.

Now the gray Night Wind, wand'ring from the sea,
With salt-mist clinging to her tangled hair,
Steals on soft pinions thro' the evening air
To slumber in the white acacia tree.

Wan ev'ning mist and shadow. Lo, I stand
From all the bitter sweet of life apart,
With this one longing living in my heart—
To feel you near and touch you with my hand!

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON.

The Trail of the Sheridan Heir

By Virginia Middleton

ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

IV.—Mr. Cromartin Plays the Disinterested Samaritan

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING PARTS

Gerald Cromartin, the son of a Dublin barrister, is sent to the United States to discover the whereabouts of a certain Peter Sheridan, who went there many years before and who is now the heir to large estates. If Sheridan is no longer living the property goes to a niece, Nora Braisted. On the way to Montreal, Gerald meets a charming young woman, Kathleen Fletcher, and also a jeweler of Denver named La Shelle, and his wife. Mrs. La Shelle asks Gerald to deliver a small package to her sister in New York. Miss Fletcher sees him receive this package. On the frontier Gerald is stopped by United States customs officers, under suspicion that he has been made a dupe of by the La Shelles and is smuggling pearls. Nothing durable, however, is found in the package. Gerald concludes from what second-hand information he gets that Fletcher was his accuser. He goes to New York, and on the way there is mistaken by a leader of anarchists for a foreign prince, is kidnaped, and taken to Paterson. When it is being deliberated as to what shall be done with him, Miss Fletcher appears, shows the anarchists their mistake, and obtains Gerald's release. Following up a clew that Peter Sheridan was once in Bluevale, Kentucky, Gerald goes there. He meets there a Judge Hathaway and goes with him to his tobacco plantation. The judge's tobacco barns are burned by rival growers. During the fight that follows the judge is wounded, and taken to the house of an old lady, Mrs. Birdsong, who turns out to be Kathleen Fletcher's grandmother. Gerald meets Kathleen, but is accorded a frigid reception.

To say that Gerald resented the extreme hauteur of Miss Fletcher's greeting is to state his emotion in lukewarm terms. He reminded himself hotly that he had suffered at her hands, and that his sufferings had not only never been atoned—they had never even been explained! In the first place, he had been the victim of her inexplicable connection with the customhouse agent, and of what he now angrily called her eavesdropping on the steamer. And for that, not a word of acknowledgment, not a word of apology!

And, though she had been the means through which he finally secured his egress from that band of lunatics who had captured him and dragged him to Paterson, he felt, with a sense of outrage, that she must have been also the means of the confusion which had dragged him thither. If either of them was entitled to bend glances of icy questioning on the other, certainly he was the person, not she. And he threw her a very creditable imitation of a scornfully amused, derisive look as she dispensed her grandmother's hospitality at the head of the old, oval, mahogany table.

It happened that the look was utterly

wasted. One of the party, between substantial mouthfuls of cold ham and bread, was telling that he agreed with Judge Hathaway in thinking that he had recognized Gilroy as a chief among the raiding party.

"A lot Ned Gilroy cares about trusts, and competition, and the rights of the growers!" scoffed the speaker. "All he cares about is a chance for deviltry. I suppose the reason he's back here is because he made his last resort too hot to hold him."

Across the candles, shining in old-silver candlesticks, Gerald had been watching her face. He had seen a sudden, arrested, stabbed look of attention born upon it at the mention of Gilroy's name. Her gray eyes sought the speaker earnestly, pleadingly, and as he went on with his strictures against the leader in the night's mischief, she grew paler.

"Who is sure that it was Ned Gilroy?" she asked. "Didn't he—hasn't he—I thought he was really doing a lot better lately."

"The only place he'll do any better is in jail," growled one of the men. "It ain't in him to keep out of trouble. The judge saw him, fast enough, and

so did Larry. You can tell his walk anywhere—can't hide that with no black-cambric masks. An' it's a funny thing—I never see a whole man, without twist or sprain to him, could hike over the ground as fast as Ned Gilroy with his limp."

"Poor Ned!" said the girl softly. Gerald felt a flash of pain all through him at the tenderness of her voice, the brooding pity of her eyes. "Poor Ned! As you say, Jim, he isn't whole—he's twisted."

"Well, Miss Kathie," interrupted Jim, "I don't want to go for to interrupt you, but I did say that he could go faster limpin' than the rest of us can go walkin' or runnin' on two good, straight legs. That there limp of Ned's ain't never troubled him much, no more than the limp he's got in his conscience has troubled him."

"Is he a native hereabouts?" asked Gerald of his next neighbor at the table.

His mouth was dry and dusty as he spoke. It was unbelievable that he could care so poignantly, so miserably, because Kathleen Fletcher exhibited an interest in a local scapegrace, a boy whom she had probably known from childhood.

"Gilroy? No, he wasn't born hereabouts. He never showed up in this neighborhood until about fifteen years ago, 'bout the time you come home to your grandma's to be made a little Eastern lady out of, Miss Kathie, wasn't it?"

They all loved to draw Kathleen into the talk, these men; Gerald noted with what an affectionate pride their eyes dwelt upon her, with what an affectionate brotherliness their tones softened as they spoke to her. And he wondered if he should ever forget the scene—the old, long room, with the faded paper on its walls, the old prints and engravings mere dark blotches in the dimness that prevailed everywhere except at the table itself, the beautiful old mahogany, the flickering lights from the candles, and the group of men, rough-and-ready fellows, big-handed, bronzed, bearded, who sat around the board, all looking toward the slender,

pale-faced girl at the head of the table. It made him think of some scene from a feudal castle, with the delicate lady of the manor surrounded by her men at arms, her retainers.

It must have been rather a pleasant thing, Gerald was inclined to believe at the moment, to be the retainer of a proud, slim, quiet little lady of a medieval manor. But, better still, to have been her knight.

And then Mrs. Birdsong came downstairs with news from the sick room. Doctor Redpath had probed for the bullet, and had extracted it. There was nothing to fear, if only the judge would be sensible and not try to go running about on the wounded leg at once; she had telephoned his wife, and she and Gwennie were coming to-morrow morning to see to it that he stayed in the big, four-poster upstairs until all danger of inflammation or stiffness was past. And then she sent Kathleen to bed.

And Gerald, rising as the girl rose, and standing as she left the room, felt that it would be an eminently pleasant thing to be the knight of a certain lady, were she only a medieval princess. As she was an independent, modern young American woman, given to crossing the sea and the continent alone, he did not quite see how he was going to volunteer for the position which seemed to him so desirable. And he marveled at the dimness of the table when she had left it.

As unmistakably as she had dismissed Kathie to her bed, Mrs. Birdsong dismissed the men to their horses. Gerald remembered all that his fellow rider that night had told him of the intrepid, commanding, little old lady. He was stumbling obediently to his feet to follow his companions to the yard, where the horses were tied, when she stopped him.

"I hope you will pass the remainder of the night with us, Mr. Cromartin," she said courteously. "You see, Mrs. Hathaway and Gwennie will be on their way here by daybreak, and you would scarcely be back at Midlands much earlier. Doctor Redpath thinks that the

judge will be able to get around again in two or three days. It was a neat, clean wound that Ned Gilroy—if it was Ned Gilroy—gave him. And then you can finish your visit with him comfortably. Until then, I hope you will consider Hilltop your home—that's the name of our place."

Gerald made polite acknowledgment of her kindness, insisting, however, that he would trespass upon her hospitality only for the one night.

"I am in Bluevale on business," he said, "and I must be getting back to it as soon as I conveniently can."

"Well, you can have that out with the judge in the morning," she conceded.

And then she called an old house servant—a white-headed old negro, twin brother, Gerald thought, to the driver of the Auditorium Hotel's hack—and he obsequitiously-lighted the young foreigner to his room, a wonderful apartment, with fine wood paneling and cornices, shabby paper, a mahogany four-poster, and a yellow-pine washstand holding a cracked white pottery basin in which stood a beautiful, dark-blue Staffordshire pitcher.

"Uncle Tom," as the inky Lord Chesterfield who bowed Gerald into the room declared himself called, placed a silver candlestick upon the top of a common shiny oak bureau, drew a quaint, rush-bottomed chair toward the fireplace in which lovely old fire irons gleamed, and desired to know at what time Mr. Cromartin would wish to be waked in the morning. Mr. Cromartin, charmed with his abode with its remnants of old glories and its confession of present-day poverty, promptly inquired the hour at which the family breakfasted.

"Mrs. Birdsong, sah, she eat her breakfiss in her room. Miss Kathleen, she eat 'bout eight."

Mr. Cromartin thought that he would be called about seven-fifteen. He did not expect to sleep after the crowded evening he had just enjoyed, but he had scarcely touched the pillow before he was "off"—fathoms deep in dreams, in which a youth with a twisted shoulder

and an evilly twisted smile was threatening him with all sorts of mishaps. And finally he discovered that the youth was no other than Peter Sheridan, taunting him with his inability to pass on an unencumbered estate to Nora Braisted; and then Nora entered the dream with exquisitely drooping lips and misty, big eyes, to reproach him with having neglected her interests—and herself.

At which juncture, Uncle Tom arrived with hot shaving water, and Gerald made haste to array himself for breakfast—a tête-à-tête breakfast in that wonderful old dining room, with that mysterious, dark-haired girl pouring his coffee at the opposite side of the big mahogany table.

He was, therefore, somewhat annoyed to learn, as Uncle Tom began to remove the covers from various dishes which were placed before him, that Miss Kathleen had breakfasted early, and had ridden away.

"But Mis' Hathaway an' Miss Gwenie, they-all air acomin' downstairs now, sah," Uncle Tom consoled.

And Gerald banished the frown from his brow and summoned a smile to his face to greet his bona-fide hostess, who, with many apologies for not remaining at her own dwelling to dispense hospitality, sat down to omelet with him. He wondered, though, as he answered her remarks and matched her tales of the perils in which tobacco growers in Kentucky stood with tales of the dangers that beset Irish landlords, whether Kathleen Fletcher had left the house so early merely to escape him. It pleased him to imagine that his presence had a powerful, even if an unpleasant, influence upon her.

The delusion was banished when the girl rode up to the house in the middle of the forenoon. Her horse was steaming, and she had the exhausted look of one who has ridden hard upon a desperate errand. Her grandmother questioned her sharply concerning her ride, and she answered vaguely. She pulled off her riding gauntlets as she stood in the wide hall, and submitted herself to the grandmotherly catechism.



"Keep your flirtatious speeches for the sort of women who care for them," she told him coldly.

"Why!" exclaimed the old lady sharply. "Where is your ring, Kathleen?"

Kathleen stared at her bare, slim, white hand. Her lips parted as though in surprise, but the color that reddened her brow beneath the broad, stiff rim of her sailor hat was not a flush of surprise. She gave a broken ejaculation of wonder, made a feint of turning her glove inside out.

"It seems to be gone!" she said at last, raising her eyes to Mrs. Birdsong's face.

"Gone? Nonsense! You had it on last night. I noticed it as you came downstairs; it flashed against the hand-rail. You must have left it in your

room when you dressed this morning, for I don't suppose you took your gloves off while you were out?"

But it seemed that she had taken her gloves off; it had been hot over by the river; she had wanted to gather a branch of Virginia creeper, which, after all, had grown too high for her. But, of course, her grandmother was probably right—she must have left the ring in her room. She would go up and see.

"You remember it, of course?" said Mrs. Birdsong to Mrs. Hathaway, as the girl slowly mounted the stairs.

Mrs. Hathaway, with many commiserating and admiring exclamations, did indeed remember it; it was, she told

Gerald, turning to include him in the little tragedy, one of the loveliest possible rings—a large and singularly fine ruby set in a handmade setting of soft, virgin gold.

"The first gold my son-in-law ever mined," explained Mrs. Birdsong, "He had always declared that the first should be made into a ring for Edith—my daughter, his wife, you know, Kathleen's mother. And the next lump that followed it he spent in Denver upon the stone. Poor fellow! The rest of the vein, or lead, or whatever they call it—pocket, I think his turned out to be—did not yield so well. But he was always glad that Edith had her ring out of the mine. If anything has happened to it—" She broke off, her face sharp with anxiety, as Kathleen reappeared.

"It's not there," said the girl lifelessly.

Gerald, with a heaviness at his heart like lead, felt quite sure that Mr. Ned Gilroy could tell the whereabouts of the ruby ring at that moment. Later in the day, when he heard Judge Hathaway roundly cursing over the information that Ned Gilroy had been seen to board a train at a station fifty miles away from the spot where certain others suspected of the night's attack were captured, he was surer still of the truth of his surmise.

The girl, always involved in mysteries wherever she happened to be, had known where to find him, had warned him that he had been recognized the night before, had provided him with the means of escape. What kind of a beast was the boy, anyway, to take a girl's keepsake in order to save himself from the punishment of his own misdeeds? What kind of a cur was it upon whom she had bestowed the treasure of her heart? For Gerald, in spite of the mysteries in which she walked, was convinced that her heart was a treasure.

Later, she sat playing cribbage with the judge, and he, admitted to the sickroom which was indeed the rallying point for all the life of the house that day, looked at the delicate hands as they hovered above the board.

"Some day I shall give her a more beautiful ring," he told himself, noting the rim at the base of her finger where the ruby had gleamed the night before. Some one came in from the sheriff's office to see the judge at that moment, and as Kathleen moved from the bedside to the window, Gerald followed her.

"It is too bad about your ring," he said. "Your grandmother was telling what an heirloom it was to you. You think that it is hopeless to look for it at the point on the river bank where you tried to get the creeper?"

"I'm afraid so."

She looked miserable and woebegone. She forgot even to treat him with her customary disdain.

"Never mind," he heard himself telling her. "I am going to get it back for you." She looked up in a sort of panic. "Oh," he went on hastily, minded only to banish the fright from her face, anxious only to dispel the fear which he saw his words had occasioned in her, the fear that he knew the whereabouts of the ring, "or to give you one that you will like better."

There! He had said it! He had uttered that astounding imbecility, that monumental impertinence! Her color flowed angrily under the fine white of her skin; her gray eyes flashed. She drew a step back from him.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" she demanded. "Or merely of the habits of good breeding?"

"I am afraid it is more serious than that," replied Gerald. He was a little pale himself now, but he forced a gleam of amusement, of spirit, into his blue eyes. "I'm terribly afraid it's my heart I've taken leave of."

She looked more angry than before, if that were possible.

"Keep your flirtatious speeches for the sort of women who care for them," she told him coldly, "for your Mrs. La Shelles, and their like!"

He was delighted by the directness of the attack. Could it be, oh, kind dispenser of good gifts to the undeserving, could it possibly be that she had been jealous of Mrs. La Shelle? Could such

a thing be? The thought warmed him, glowed in his face, and eyes, and voice.

"I shall keep all my speeches for you," he said. "Oh, don't be so angry with me! I am in earnest! I——"

But the impetuous Mr. Cromartin found himself addressing the wall against which Miss Fletcher had been standing. She was leaving the room with great, though wrathful, dignity.

It was the last glimpse he caught of her. He did not dare risk committing a further crime against her wishes by sending her a note of abject apology; he merely hung around the house for two days hoping to see her again, while Judge Hathaway convalesced in spite of his irritation at his confinement and his rage that the person whom he declared to be the ringleader in the whole barn-burning business should have escaped.

She kept her room while he remained in the house, and when he realized that he was making her a prisoner, he summoned up a belated interest in the chase of Peter Sheridan, and returned to Bluevale, where much information concerning land transfers in the late seventies and early eighties awaited him. From the Auditorium Hotel, where he was welcomed like a returning brother, he sent her a note.

It is for my abruptness, for what may have seemed to you my flippancy, that I tender you my apologies. As for the meaning that my words must have conveyed, I was entirely and gravely in earnest, and for that feeling I make no apology whatever. No woman can demand apology from a man for declaring that he loves her, that he begs the honor of making her his wife, that he wishes to give her, so far as his poor capacity may be able to compass it, all the desires of her heart. That, however blundering and inept my speech may have been, was what I meant. That, my dear lady, is what I mean. That you may some day rejoice in believing me, is my dearest wish. Meantime I only beg you for an answer showing that you understand me and forgive me for what was offensive in my words and conduct at Hilltop.

The reply was the return of his own letter to him. After which, he fell upon the matter of Peter Sheridan with the angry energy which a sense of oppression, of injustice, arouses in some men.

He told himself a dozen times that he had been a fool, that he was not in love with the girl. Why should he, who had had the advantage of being on the verge of love with so many charming, agreeable, understandable young women—why should he be in love with a pale, inexplicable, bad-tempered young person who had for friends and associates secret-service men, anarchists, barn burners, and the like? He hoped that he did not have to descend to the classes of those with criminal sympathies to find a proper object for his devotion.

He was not in love with her! He had merely gone crazy for a few days, as she herself had suggested. He had taken leave of his senses. Did there not grow in this remarkable country, in which he found himself, a plant which caused the animals eating it to go insane? "Locoed," they called it—the La Shelles had told him about it. Well, he had been locoed. But he had taken the correct antidote, in the shape of a letter of his own returned to him in a typewritten envelope?

He was not so thoroughly cured that he did not welcome whatever information he could acquire about the girl, however. It was not vast in extent or highly interesting in quality. Edith Birdsong had married one Fletcher, a stranger in those parts, and he had eventually carried her West with him, after a little unprofitable experimenting in horse raising in the Bluevale region. She had come home occasionally to visit; Kathleen had been born at Hilltop on one of those visits. Edith had given evidence that her husband was no more successful in the West than he had been in the East; her clothes had been poor, the money for the journey had been forthcoming less and less frequently.

By and by, word was received that she had died—Kathleen had been eight or ten then. And Kathleen, a poor, thin, sad little thing in her limp black frock and her long black legs, was sent to her Grandmother Birdsong's for education and upbringing. The old lady had given them to her until the child was sixteen, when she had rejoined her

father in Colorado or California, or wherever it might have been. And since then she had spent only a short part of each year with her grandmother, although the neighbors all seemed to regard her as belonging to their region rather than to that vast, unknown one in which her father had lived and died.

Oh, yes, he had died out there somewhere; always a queer duck he was, though not in the bad way in which some of the men who had drifted into Bluevale, and out again, were queer. Take that case of Gresham, now—by the way, wasn't Gresham's name on the list of those who had bought land some time about eighty? Thus the gossiping clerk from Judge Hathaway's office. Gerald, whose interest had begun to die down when another name than that of Fletcher was introduced, pricked up his ears. He looked over his list. Yes, here was the name, all right—Gresham, Henry.

"He was a bad lot," volunteered the clerk. "I wonder could he be the party we're after? I never saw him myself; my father and mother thought they could better themselves somewhere else, and when they were first married, they were all for a big city, and went to New York. I was quite a big-sized chap before they decided they had had enough of that, and came back home again. But I remember hearing my grandmother Jennings tell of Gresham; he boarded with her a spell when he first came. A regular soak, from all that she used to tell, and quarrelsome as they make 'em. It was just about the date that your man is supposed to have come here, too."

"Let us go over to the registry of deeds and look into this transfer to Gresham from—why, it's from Mrs. Birdsong!"

"So it is," agreed the clerk cordially.

And they went over to the registry of deeds, stopping, according to the time-honored Bluevale's legal procedure, at the bar of the Auditorium Hotel on their route.

The unilluminated description of the registry office gave no hint as to whether or not they were indeed upon the trail

of Mr. Peter Sheridan. Gerald was excited, interested. The events of the past few weeks began to recede from the forefront of his thoughts, and he remembered his father, Nora, Sir Charles, their eagerness for news—perhaps Nora would have her emeralds soon, now! Perhaps, from that uninspiring statement that on such and such a date, for one dollar and other consideration, Lucinda Birdsong, widow, had conveyed to Henry Gresham a tract of fifty-seven acres, lying so and so, bounded on the north, east, south, and west by such and such properties, highroads, and streams, would flow all sorts of golden wonders.

"Is your grandmother alive?" Gerald asked the clerk.

The ancient lady was—a leetle deaf, but otherwise as good as new, according to her dutiful grandson.

"She would remember what her lodger looked like, you think?" inquired Mr. Croomartin.

The clerk was sure of it. They went back to the Auditorium Hotel to fish out of Gerald's trunk the copy of the photograph which Mr. Hamidge kept in his Sheridan file.

"Grandma!" screamed grandma's dutiful relative, when he had formally presented Gerald to the old lady. "Grandma, this gentleman wants to know all you can tell him about that lodger you had back there twenty-five or twenty-six years ago—that Gresham."

Grandma surveyed Gerald critically.

"He looks young for his age," she asserted.

The clerk tried it over again, this time conveying the impression that Gerald was a relative of Gresham's.

"If he's kin of yours, you'll be willing to settle his bill he left owin' me," she said, with much stateliness and an evident determination not to be cheated.

"No, no!" screamed her distracted grandson, and then she produced from a sort of pocket on the side of her chair a black ear trumpet.

"Say what you have to say," she commanded Gerald, and he tried to obey her stern behest. But the effort of

shouting his wishes into the trumpet overcame him with mingled mirth and embarrassment.

"I'll write it," he said; and forth-with a pad and a pencil were requisitioned.

Would she recognize a picture of her quondam lodger if she should see it? Aye, that she would; she wasn't one to forget how the man looked who had cheated her out of thirty-five good dollars, she declared.

Gerald's heart beat hard as he produced the picture of the dark, brooding boy. Grandma snorted as she looked at it, having first performed a lengthy ceremony known as changing her glasses.

"Tain't no more like him than I be!" she asserted dogmatically.

She was annoyed with her grandson for bothering her—she said as much. It was time for her afternoon milk and a nap, and she would be glad to be allowed to enjoy them. Gerald tried, desparingly, to induce her to alter her verdict, to look again, at least, at the portrait of Peter Sheridan, to admit that the lapse of time might have transformed such a youth as he appeared to be into such a man as she remembered her lodger. In vain! Grandma, with an air of offended dignity, consented to receive a five-dollar bill from Gerald as a slight salve to her ruffled feelings, but she was headstrong about refusing even to look again at the piece of cardboard on which the features of Peter Sheridan had been imprinted.

Gerald saw it as a clear duty that he owed the Braisteds to go out to Hilltop and interview old Mrs. Birdsong as to the identity of the man to whom she had once sold a tract of land. The clerk tried to dissuade him, tried to persuade him that Bluevale itself would reveal many who would be sure to remember this Gresham, and that the trip to the Birdsong farm was an idle one. But Gerald asserted fervently that too much was involved in the matter to justify him in neglecting the slightest clew. The clerk might be arranging interviews with such Bluevalians as happened to recall Gresham, but he himself would

motor out to Hilltop at once and speak to Mrs. Birdsong on the subject.

It was with a boyishly beating heart that he approached the house. He had rehearsed in his mind his meeting—he thought it an inevitable meeting—with Kathleen. She would be on the wide veranda—the day was hazily, goldenly warm; he would be upon her before she could escape. He would run up the broad steps from the car, and she would stand, frowning, indignant, questioning, before him. Her eyes would demand of him why he had come, how he had dared to come, what he could possibly hope to compass by coming? And he, suave, smiling, impersonal, would reply to all that volume of haughty questioning in her eyes: "Is Mrs. Birdsong at home?" And while he waited for Mrs. Birdsong, he would chat pleasantly and indifferently upon one thing and another with the nonplussed girl.

Unfortunately for the brilliant appearance of entire, remote indifference he was to present to Miss Kathleen Fletcher at Hilltop, it was Mrs. Birdsong, and not her granddaughter, who was on the piazza. His spirits fell. There was no chance for amateur theatricals followed by a little real drama. He received Mrs. Birdsong's greetings with an absurd gloom, so that the old lady was constrained to say:

"I hope there is nothing wrong, Mr. Cromartin? You look troubled."

"I am troubled, my dear Mrs. Birdsong," he answered, pulling himself together. "I'm in this country to find some trace, if it can be found, of a certain Irish ne'er-do-well, whose unexplained absence is delaying the settlement of a big estate. Something leads me to think that there is a bare chance a man to whom you once sold a tract of land—a Henry Gresham—may possibly be the one; it's a wild shot, just one chance in ten thousand, you know. But I want to ask you to compare a photograph I have of the missing man with your recollection of Henry Gresham—"

"Oh, dear, I'm so sorry!" interrupted Mrs. Birdsong, as though she were much to blame for not having recollec-

tions on tap. "But I never saw Gresham in my life, so far as I know. Where did you find out that I had sold him the land? In the registry of deeds? Well, didn't it tell there, or didn't you happen to notice, that the papers were signed for me by Judge Hathaway's father? I was away from home at the time of the transfer, and he had power of attorney to sign for me. I never saw Mr. Gresham that I know of; and I guess, from a good deal I've heard, that I didn't miss much!"

Gerald's hand, arrested on its way to the pocket in which reposed Peter Sheridan's photograph, transferred itself to his cigarette case.

"May I smoke?" he asked automatically.

He was deeply disappointed. He had had an irrational hope that the whole thing was to be cleared up thus, suddenly, without further effort or drudgery on

his part. Mrs. Birdsong said that he might smoke, and added a little neighborhood news to which Gerald listened absently until her granddaughter's name occurred in the recital.

"I'm sorry to have Gwenie go off with her mother to New York just now," was what she was saying, "for Gwenie is always a good deal of company to me when Kathleen first goes away."

"Miss Fletcher is not here, then?"

Gerald had been galvanized into attention.

"No, she went back to Denver last week. You know she teaches out there. Her poor father could not leave her much, and what little he did leave is tied up in some peculiar way until she is twenty-five—not so long now. Why, let me see—it's next spring. Anyway, she teaches. I want her to come and live with me, but she tells me I wouldn't



"Say what you have to say," she commanded Gerald, and he tried to obey her stern behest.

love her half so much if I had her all the time. I suppose she means that all her little, modern ways, her independent fads and hobbies, might clash with my old-fashioned ways! I dare say she's right. I don't claim to be a very open-minded old woman, Mr. Cromartin, and I've had my own way an appalling number of years. I know I should be finding fault with half her occupations—criticizing all her queer friends; the child has a genius for attaching the

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most amazing human beings to herself. And she's chock-full of theories, like her father before her. No, I reckon she's right, I reckon we get more good of each other this way. But I do miss her when she goes back. I miss her terribly!"

"Why don't you pay her a visit?" Gerald found himself deeply sympathetic with the old lady who missed Kathleen Fletcher so terribly.

"I'm going to, this winter. She and two other girls keep house together in a flat out by a big park they have in Denver; she tells me she can see the Rocky Mountains out of her bedroom windows, right across that park. One of the other girls is a newspaper woman—do you have newspaper women in Ireland, Mr. Cromartin? Oh, lady writers? I reckon that's different. And the other girl teaches cooking in the public schools out there. Kathie's in a private school, and she does tutoring, besides. She had a long holiday last summer."

"She—she didn't come back from the other side until quite late, did she?"

"No; only a little while before she came here—and you came here. She's a dear girl. I hope she won't grow too faddy, as she grows older." She sighed.

"Oh, young people usually get out of their more peculiar theories as they gain experience, don't you think?" he comforted her.

But she sighed again.

"She's so like her father," she said, in explanation.

Then she gave him the names and addresses of people in Bluevale who could tell him a great deal about the career of Henry Gresham in those parts. And Mr. Cromartin departed, less joyous than he had arrived, but filled with the conviction that it was the bounden duty of every visiting Englishman to visit Denver. He recalled, with a burst of affection, certain men whom he had known at home who had gone to the western part of "the States"; he asked the chauffeur if he had any idea how near Tacoma, Washington, was to Denver, Colorado. He could, by an effort, remember the name of the dear

friend who had settled in Tacoma, and he had quite made up his mind to visit him if that flourishing city was near the habitat of Miss Kathleen Fletcher. The chauffeur, however, had studied his native geography, and dashed Gerald's hopes at once.

Thrown back upon the Gresham business, he found that there was plenty to unearth in regard to that gentleman's course in the neighborhood of Bluevale, in the early eighties. It is a rather gigantic drunkard whose potations are remembered for more than a quarter of a century, rather a monumental swindler whose thievings win the same immortality, rather a colossal Lothario whose violent *affaires de cœur* retain a spicy interest after so long a time. But, once the investigation began among those who had actually known Gresham, the stories concerning him were as vivid, as discreditable, as disgraceful, indeed, as if his iniquities had been those of yesterday.

The land that he had bought? Oh, he held title to that only for the briefest period. He had paid for it chiefly in talk and by a heavy mortgage; but as he never paid any interest on the mortgage, that was soon foreclosed. It was on the race track, in the cardroom, in the barroom, rather than in the land offices, that the record of him was kept.

There was only one drawback to Gerald's whole-souled delight in the completeness of the reminiscences concerning Mr. Henry Gresham. That was that most of those whom he had challenged with Peter Sheridan's photograph had declined to admit any resemblance between it and the hero of their tales. Once in a while some obliging creature discovered "a little likeness about the forehead, maybe," or agreed that "of course a beard would make a great difference in such a face." But there had not been the prompt acclaim—"That's him! That's Hen Gresham!"—for which Gerald had hoped. He was sulkily inclined to attribute this fact to a willful blindness on the part of those Bluevalians who claimed to remember Gresham, rather than to the lack of a resemblance.

See the points of resemblance! he said to himself. Here, at the very date which the poor, old, filibustering Hardy had indicated for Peter's settling in Bluevale—here at that very time appears a man of unknown antecedents in Bluevale; Peter was a man of violent temper; so was the newcomer; Peter Sheridan was a notorious drinker; so was the newcomer; if lawlessness in the emotional and domestic relations had not been ascribed to Peter by those who had furnished Gerald with the items of his career, Gerald felt sure that this was a mere oversight; Peter was always at odds with authority; so was Gresham.

"It's as plain as the nose on your face," said Gerald, addressing the circumambient air, "that Gresham was Peter Sheridan, and no other!"

The next point was to discover Gresham's whereabouts. Bluevale had known him no more after a tempestuous eight or ten years. He had left under a cloud, a dense cloud. He had left with a large bank roll belonging to a citizen whose wife he had admired so effectively that she had robbed her husband of his money as a preparation for an elopement with Gresham; he, however, possessing himself of the wealth, had rid himself of the lady by the simple process of knocking her senseless on the lonely road, where their rendezvous was made; she had been picked up unconscious, and had either remained, or, through fear of her husband, had feigned to remain, in a stupor for several days, during which, it was supposed, Mr. Gresham had put a large section of the North American continent between himself and her. He had never reappeared in Bluevale, either voluntarily or at the solicitation of the detectives whom the wronged husband had put upon his track.

"Peter, my friend," quoth Gerald to himself, reading this report, submitted by the indefatigable clerk of Judge Hathaway's office, who had evidently worked hard to efface the recollection of his failure with his grandmother, "I am inclined to think that I see you in all of this. Though, upon my word, I wish

I didn't. I don't like to think that a countryman of my own, even if he is a remittance man, could do a dirty trick like that. It was a dirty trick, Peter—to knock the poor fool of a woman down and leave her lying there in the dark road—and you Nora Braisted's uncle!"

Then he laughed at himself for leaping to conclusions, and blew a ring of smoke toward the land where pretty Nora waited the confirmation of her riches, waited her emeralds—and amused herself how in the meantime? Gerald didn't care how she amused herself. And he was properly grateful that he had never been led to pretend to care too much.

The young clerk, who felt himself living in a most exciting melodrama since the identification, in Gerald's mind, of Gresham and Sheridan, came over to the hotel one evening on the heels of his latest written report.

"We've found a man who saw him after he left Bluevale," he announced triumphantly. "It's Nat Wilder. He was a great hand to travel, Nat was, an' he took his second honeymoon trip—the one with his second wife, I mean—out in the Grand Cañon of the Colorado."

"Ah, near Denver, I suppose," said Gerald lightly.

"Well, not so very, I reckon," said the clerk, wondering why the visiting Irishman wished to parade his ignorance. "Denver's in Colorado, to be sure, but this Grand Cañon that Nat took his second to see is in Arizona. It's all pretty much the same kind of country," he went on, anxious to spare his interlocutor's feelings—of course, it was natural the chap shouldn't know very much about the West. "Well, an' while Nat was honeymooning around, they got held up somewhere by a big storm and washout. And there Nat ran into Gresham. He felt the way people feel when they're three thousand miles or so away from home—sort of glad to see any familiar face, even if it was an enemy's. So he stepped up to this fellow—it was in a station restaurant; they were held up at this sta-



"What's yer name?" I says to him."

tion waiting for orders to go ahead when the washout damage was repaired—and this man Gresham, he was working in this restaurant. And Nat ups and says: 'Why, hello, ain't this Hen Gresham, from Bluevale?' But the other looks him in the eye and says: 'Meaning me? You're barking up the wrong tree, mister.' But Nat allowed he didn't make any mistake in the matter. Only, of course, if Gresham didn't want any one to know who he'd been, why, no one could blame him. But Nat saw the mark he'd know him by if he hadn't known him by his face—he had lost the top of his left-hand little finger in some shooting brawl down on the Bluevale levee—and the top of the left little finger was gone from the hand of this man."

"What was the place?"
"It was Copper Gulch, in New Mexico."

"How long ago?"
"Ninety-eight. That was the year of Nat's second marriage, and so he can swear to it, though he's such a born traveler that he can't keep all his traveling dates straight unless he has something important to remember them by."

"And since then?"
"That was the last seen of him. The man whose money he took had died in the meantime, and there was no one very keen on pursuing Henry Gresham. And, as far as I can find out, that's the last time he was seen by any one from this part of the world."

With that information, Gerald's clew

to Peter Sheridan in Bluevale ended. He was obliged to admit to himself that there was by no means a clear connection between the outrageous Gresham and the wandering black sheep for whom he was searching. Still, he felt that there was sufficient ground for believing the two men identical to justify him in following up the Copper Gulch lead. He was not sure enough of himself, however, to start posthaste for New Mexico. He went back to New York instead, reported to Hamidge & Jay, heard them admit that possibly there might be something in the connection; but heard them follow up this admission with the suggestion that it would be wise for him to wait until their office could communicate with Copper Gulch before going out there himself.

"It may not be necessary at all," said Mr. Hamidge encouragingly.

Not necessary! Gerald felt chilled at the possibility of his being cheated out of that Southwestern excursion which he had promised himself should end at Denver, in the flat which three independent young American women maintained. However, he listened to advice. He would spend Christmas in New York; he would take a brief vacation from his labors; would gladly accept Mr. Hamidge's courtesy in putting him up at two or three clubs; would go out to Garrison to meet Mrs. Hamidge and her daughters; would go to the opera; would have a little taste of New York social life.

While he was enjoying it, came a pretty little note from Nora.

Emeralds are going up every day. Will you never bring me home a fortune to buy them? And if you can't bring me a fortune, are you never going to bring me home a friend and playmate whom I miss—oh, awfully?

He put it aside without even a throb of gratified vanity. He went to a big jeweler's, however, where they made a specialty of semiprecious stones; and he ordered a little trinket made up with clear green garnets. Then he wrote:

They're as pretty as emeralds, dear Lady Braisted, and yet so trifling that Sir Charles

will let you accept this danglet—what do you women call them?—from the most impoverished of your friends.

He did not mention—naturally he did not mention it to Nora Braisted—that at the same time he had ordered a ring made of moonstones and diamonds.

"Soft, and mysterious, and radiant," murmured Gerald to himself, after he had committed this extravagance. "Like her. And some day I'll find that one she lost, poor girl, in the shop that loathsome little cad pawned it in; and I'll give her that, too."

The information which Hamidge & Jay received from Copper Gulch concerning the identity and the career of a man who served as a waiter in the railroad restaurant there during a part of the year 1898 was meager in the extreme. Gerald had taken the precaution, before leaving Bluevale, to equip himself with the month in which Nat Wilder had visited the Grand Cañon. Nat had even been so obliging as to recall the very day of the washout.

But, even with this exact knowledge, the agents of Hamidge & Jay had discovered nothing. The railroad authorities, duly consulting ancient records, had learned that on that particular date, that particular station restaurant was suffering from a strike on the part of its regular force. The vacancies had been filled by chance hands, who had not remained in the eating-department service of the road. Regretting that they were able to be of no further assistance to Messrs. Hamidge & Jay, they were, et cetera, et cetera.

"I'm afraid we're at the end of a blind alley," said Mr. Hamidge.

"I think I ought to go out and see for myself," replied Gerald.

The older man slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid your chances of success are even slimmer than those of the railroad people, my dear fellow," he replied. "Think what the probability is—that some tramp, stealing a ride on a freight train, dropped off at Copper Gulch one day, and was impressed into service by a desperate management with a strike in its eating room to man-

age. It all happened eight years ago—and you're not even a native of these United States; and it will be more difficult for you to get information than for one of the native born. Besides, when all is said and done, what earthly guarantee have we that the man would prove to be Peter Sheridan?"

"Not a guarantee in the world, sir, I grant you that," said Gerald, smiling. "But to follow up even the least clew is what I am here for. Of course, if we could guarantee any one in particular to be Peter Sheridan, it wouldn't be necessary for me to be here at all. Besides, I'm going to take it as a holiday also. I want to see your great West."

"Well, in that case, you must let me give you some letters," said the old man kindly. "And I'm sure I hope your face-to-face search will prove more successful than this long-distance one we've been conducting."

Early January beheld the young man again embarked upon his journey. Rigorously he put down an impulse to go straight to Denver—Mrs. Birdsong was there, and therefore his excuse for appearing at Kathleen Fletcher's home was ready to his hand. He had sent both the hostesses to whom he was indebted for hospitality at Bluevale a Christmas remembrancer in the shape of a tooled leather book cover; and Mrs. Birdsong's thanks had been dated from her granddaughter's Western abode.

He felt that he was tempting Providence not to go there at once. Who could say how long Mrs. Birdsong might remain, how soon might come that clash between old ways and new, between wholesome commonplaceness, as Gerald saw it, in the older woman, and something that was far from commonplace—far from sensible, too, perhaps—and yet very fine in the younger women?

He was really a very conscientious young man to make his way first to Copper Gulch, New Mexico. He admitted to himself that he did not care a brass farthing for the Grand Cañon, for which he was booked, or for any

of the other items in the Wonderland of America. He wanted to reach Denver as soon as he could, and he would very much like to locate the remains of Mr. Peter Sheridan beforehand, so as to have his mind free for the consideration of his own condition.

Fortune favored him conspicuously. Dropping off at Copper Gulch—as uninviting a spot at which to drop off as the whole of the United States could afford—Gerald made his way at once into the restaurant. Presiding near a burnished tank of coffee was a trig, sour-faced woman exchanging conversation with a conductor off duty.

"Laws-zee!" she was saying, as Gerald seated himself near the conductor and cast an entreating glance toward her, meant to bespeak her attention to his pressing need of food. "Laws-zee, do you remember that strike we-all went out on, back in ninety-eight? A powerful sight of good that did any of us, didn't it? We-all come back at the company's own terms before three days was out. I come sooner, for I saw sooner how it was goin' to be. I was back the same night; an' I tell you they made short work of a scab they'd took on while I was out. Yorder, please."

This last, with a startling abruptness, was shot at Gerald.

He gave his order.

"That was that fellah that hung around Casey's place for a while, wasn't it?" asked the conductor between—or, rather, in the midst of—two mouthfuls of custard pie.

"Uh-huh! Just about his level, too, it was. Whatever become of him?"

"Dunno. I was on the Santa Fé run four or five years, an' lost sight of the folks on this one."

"Same here. I've been waiting in El Paso, an' Fiero, an' a half dozen other places. Funny to be back in the old shop. But I gave that fellah a piece of my mind that night—tryin' to take a woman's bread out of her mouth! I wouldn't have said a word if he'd been scabbin' some man's job, but a woman's! Pretty small potatoes, I call it."

"You gave it to him good and hot, didn't you?"

The conductor, wiping his mouth and settling back to the enjoyment of a leisurely toothpick, incited her to further reminiscences. She told all that she had said to her temporary supplanter; probably a good deal that she had not said.

"What's yer name?" I says to him. "Tell it to me, for I'm goin' to remember it—the man what'd steal a woman's job." An' he laughed at me, that fresh, an' said he'd give me more cause than that to remember it, an' asked me how I'd like to try it for my own—the im-piddence!"

"Bully for you, Peter—or Gresham!" Gerald silently applauded the long-past daring of the man whom he searched.

"What did he call himself, by the way?" asked the conductor.

"Graham."

"Graham, to be sure! That was the name he went by at Casey's place. But you didn't take up with his offer about changing your own name to his, I guess, Miss Tuldin."

Miss Tuldin gave it to be understood that she most emphatically did not. And then the conductor, toothpick in mouth, sauntered away; and Gerald ventured to ask the sharp-faced lady to repeat all that he had already heard her say. Did the insolent Graham look thus and so, he inquired, repeating the description of Gresham which had been given him in Bluevale.

It seemed almost unbelievable that he should have so readily, so promptly, stumbled upon the information that he desired. He was quite persuaded, by now, that Gresham was Peter Sheridan—the very length of time he had spent in following up the Gresham clew demanded it; the whole thing would be too absurd otherwise.

Of course, it was so. In two or three hours he would have the final details in the career of Gresham in his possession; he would know his present whereabouts, the mystery of the Sheridan succession would be about cleared, and he could go on to Denver and—and—what? He did not know. He was not sure of anything except the desire to see Kathleen Fletcher again.

The next half hour convinced him, had he ever had any doubts on the subject, that he was indeed a favorite of the gods. At Casey's place, a spot of bibulous refreshment, glittering with red woodwork, with plate-glass mirrors, with glasses, with liquors of many hues in many queer-shaped bottles—it was Casey's boast, as well as that of a hundred others like him, that he had "the finest place west of Chicago." He found the case of Graham well remembered, and with reason.

"He played one of the slickest card games it was ever my lot to look on at," said Casey, paying his tribute with a certain dignity of regret in his manner. "When I see it—it was in my early days, Mr. Cromartin, before I'd made good; and, besides, I wanted a man around that would make the place feared by other card sharks. When I see what he can do with the pasteboard pieces, I says to him: 'Headquarters, Mr. Graham, as long as you'll play fair with the regular patrons an' turn in a modest percentage of your winnin's. Losin's,' I said, 'can go on the house. What do you say?' He took me up straight and square; an' of my own knowledge of him, Mr. Cromartin, I don't know a thing that isn't honorable." Casey sighed.

"Yet you parted from him?" urged Gerald, anxious to come to the point of Gresham's present whereabouts.

"Why, I thought you knew!" cried Casey, in surprise. "He hadn't been but two years in Copper Gulch, Mr. Cromartin, when he was struck down by a murderous hand from behind. Cold-blooded murder, in this very room. I've seen some blood spilled in my time, Mr. Cromartin, but never any I regretted more than that—an assassination in my own place."

"An enemy?" asked Gerald.

He was tense and strung with the excitement of the chase. Here was the end of Peter, then—and surely there would be some way of proving Gresham Peter.

"An enemy," repeated Mr. Casey solemnly, moving away for a moment to attend to the needs of a customer.

When he returned, Gerald had his question ready.

"Tell me, Mr. Casey, did the man, Graham, leave any family?"

He bent forward in the intensity of his interest. Mr. Casey smiled slyly.

"Well, not in the regular sense, if I may say so, sir," he replied. "There was a woman; but her claims was disproved before the probate judge. An' I never took no stock in them myself, for Graham used often to say to me, quite earnest and truthful like: 'I've done a heap of fool things in my time, Casey, an' I shan't go so far as to say I shan't do a heap more. But one thing is certain. I ain't ever been such a fool as to give any woman a claim on me that the courts would hold me to. You can be sure of that, Casey; and, when any Mrs. Grahams come around, you can show them out for me.' No, sir, I really believe him about that feature of his life. I don't think he ever married."

"From what you say, I judge he had some little property which some woman claimed as his widow. Am I right?"

"Exactly. But her claims was not allowed. She'd no more right to call herself his widow than what I have. No, when all the hullabaloo was over, his property—he had some share in a mine out here, an' one or two other things—it all went to his poor, old, blind father back in New Hampshire."

"His old, blind father. *Where?*" shouted the discomfited Mr. Cromartin.

With his air of mild protest at unseemly behavior, Mr. Casey repeated his offending statement.

"Then he was an American?" said Gerald, wiping his forehead.

"He certainly was, sir," replied Mr. Casey, with patriotic pride. Gerald drew a long breath of defeat. "An American; an' it was a fellow American who had been wronged by him back there in New Hampshire. Graham had run away with the other fellow's wife, and had deserted her; an' the thing that made the husband hot for revenge was his desertin' her, not just his runnin' off with her. A queer character, sir. Yes, it all happened back in seventy-

eight. It all came out on the trial. It acquitted the other fellow, that story."

"And you're sure he was the same man who went by the name of Gresham in Kentucky in the early eighties?"

"He's shown me letters he had under that name, an' pictures of horses he raced under that name."

"Seventy-eight. New Hampshire. An old, blind father." Gerald repeated all the words that proved to him what a particularly wild-goose chase he had been giving himself.

Apparently it did not prove a man to be the blackguard one sought just because he was a blackguard in the right place at the right time.

"There are more of them in the world than I would have believed," said young Mr. Cromartin to himself, continuing a forlorn journey of inspection toward the Grand Cañon.

What should he do next? After he had viewed this marvel of nature, and had seen the Rocky Mountains from Denver, what should he do concerning Peter Sheridan? Probably the wisest course would be that advised by Mr. Hamidge—to go home and set in motion the slow machinery for declaring the man dead. Then, by and by, Nora could come into her birthright, and be as gay a spendthrift as the United Kingdom afforded.

At the Grand Cañon, he felt that he would like to be on his honeymoon, like Nat Wilder. He pictured the small, pale face raised to his, with tenderness, with gayety, with sweet comradeliness. It was strange that a girl who had shown him so little of the softness and the charm of her nature should have succeeded in convincing him that she possessed so great a fund of it. And he thought frowningly of Gilroy as he resumed his trip toward Denver.

It was an unexpectedly delightful glimpse he had of the home life of the three independent spinsters when he paid his call upon—Mrs. Birdsong, of course. He had risked the chance of not finding them at home, and had given no warning of his intention. In the evening, he had set out in a cab to find the address which his kind little, old



"Who the devil are you?"

friend of Bluevale had given him. A big, bright-looking house opposite a wide park sheltered his acquaintances; pleasant balconies ran along each story, breaking the hard lines of the façade cheerfully. Lights shone invitingly from every window. It was a gala-looking place.

Kathleen and her two comrades were having a little "old-lady" party for Kathleen's grandmother. All the gray-haired women of their acquaintance in Denver had been pressed into service as guests, and the suite of rooms—they were commodious, bright rooms, as Gerald could see—had twelve or fifteen old ladies, some playing cards, some crocheting or knitting while they talked. The three girls moved among them, butterflylike.

There was a merry hum of voices as he was ushered in. Kathleen stood at the drawing-room door, welcome on her face. When she saw who it was, her look changed; but, to his relief, it did not darken, as he had feared. Instead, it expressed a comical dismay.

"Oh!" she cried. "I thought you were old Mrs. Margot! But I think grandma and all her guests will be glad-

der to see you than they would have been even to see Mrs. Margot. We're giving an old-lady party for grandma; and I assure you the vain old dear has said to me half a dozen times that a party doesn't seem a party to her without gentlemen!"

He had had the privilege of holding her hand during a considerable portion of this speech. Her eyes had been dwelling upon him with frank gayety, with no recollection in their gray depths of her haughty leave-taking of him two months before.

"It is only you young things who think you can get on without us," he answered her, laughing. "When a woman is as old and wise as your dear grandmother, she knows better!"

Then he was greeted by Mrs. Birdsong with frank expressions of delight, and was presented to all the quaint guests of the evening, as well as to Kathleen's two fellows. And all during the happy evening that followed, there had been upon her self-forgetful face no hint of a remembrance of her animosity against him. He handed sandwiches to the old ladies, and persuaded timorous ones to venture upon

an unwonted indulgence in coffee. He banished the dread of ices eaten "the last thing before retiring" from others. He won golden opinions among them; and even the two other young hostesses voted him an addition to the festivity.

"He's a lovely tame young man!" he heard the newspaper woman confide to Kathleen, in the pantry, as he returned thither to refill a hearty old lady's plate with salad. "A truly lovely tame young man. I didn't suppose that anything less habituated to old ladies' meetings than a British curate could make himself so generally useful."

"There's nothing much of a curate about him," Kathleen answered, with a touch of something like annoyance in her tones.

And then he presented the hearty old lady's request for more salad, and heard no more of how he impressed the company.

The next afternoon, he called again upon Mrs. Birdsong, this time by appointment. Kathleen had not come home from school. The two strangers in the city were to do some sightseeing. Mrs. Birdsong looked a little fagged.

"Too much party?" suggested Gerald, when she confessed to feeling not quite herself.

"No, it is not that. It's the sight of the way these girls live; it's wondering what they'll all come to. They are all delightful; they're complete in themselves; they're energetic, independent, efficient, kind, friendly souls. I don't see why one of them should ever think longingly of a home and a husband until it's too late for thinking to do them any good. And I'm an old-fashioned woman, Mr. Cromartin. I want my girl to marry, just as I wanted her mother to marry. Edith did not choose the man out of all the world whom I desired her to choose; but I gave her to him gladly, knowing that she would enjoy more, live more with him, since she loved him, than she could enjoy and live in any other way. And Kathie, though the child doesn't know it, is so like them both, like my daughter Edith, and like poor Peter Fletcher, who was

a dreamer, if ever there was one. Well, she would have a fit, no less, if she knew that I was talking her over in this fashion with any one!"

"Especially since I agree so heartily with all your views, in general, and in particular, that I have already aroused Miss Kathleen's ire by proposing to her!" confessed Gerald.

Kathleen's grandmother nearly fainted.

"You? Why—when did you have the chance? You only saw her once or twice. I don't understand."

"I scarcely understand it myself," replied Gerald. "And I think she understands it least of all. I had met her on the steamer, you know——"

And he sketched his ocean experiences, suppressing what seemed to him discreditable to Kathleen in the story. Mrs. Birdsong frowned, and shook her head.

"I've never understood all the details of that voyage," she said. "Oh, I don't hold with this letting girls manage their own affairs at all."

"Do you know this young Gilroy?" asked Gerald.

He felt that he had an ally in Kathleen's grandmother, even though she might not be a very strong one. Again Mrs. Birdsong sighed and frowned.

"Don't talk to me about that," she said. "It's too absurd an idea to trouble any one with a grain of sense. And yet I confess that it troubles me a good deal."

After which, the sight-seeing expedition was not a hilarious success, neither of the sight-seers developing much interest in the big smelting plant, which was the object of their pilgrimage that afternoon.

The next day Gerald found, to his annoyance, that the letters of introduction which he had from Hamidge & Jay had involved him in more or less of a social routine. Kathleen's manner gave him no excuse for avoiding the other Denverites, who were disposed to be agreeable to him. Finally the Denizens, wealthy ranch people, invited him up to their place for some shooting.

"Shall I go?" he asked Kathleen.

"Why do you ask me?" There was no coquetry in her tone, only a weariness of all that the question implied.

"I ask you because I hope you will tell me to stay in Denver," he replied.

He was earnest enough; but his eyes had the smile, his voice the drollery, that seemed to denote another mood than one of deepest gravity.

"I think I told you once that I wished you would keep speeches of that sort for the sort of woman who likes them? By the way, you found Mrs. La Shelle again?

"So you saw us yesterday? Well, to be exact, she found me. She hailed me from a street car, and then was good enough to alight and walk with me. By the way, she explained a certain mystery to me."

"A mystery?"

"My ridiculous detention in the customhouse at the frontier."

Kathleen's color changed.

"She explained that?" Her voice was not quite comfortable.

"Yes. She said that she knew you were an agent of the government, working in conjunction with that—with Mr. Jaffray—and that she was sure you would suspect her of trying to use me to smuggle some things which—which you thought she had—" Gerald hurried over this part of his explanation.

"Why don't you say some pearls which she had?"

"You can readily imagine that I am not likely to say anything of the sort to a customs agent," replied Gerald. "But it was Mrs. La Shelle's idea of a pleasantry to give me, in your hearing, a package which you would think dutiable."

"And thereby succeed in carrying in herself what was really dutiable with only a half search!" The girl's voice was angry. "Oh, I have understood the situation ever since—ever since—the day you came in. She was cleverer than I—that was all. She got her pearls through—they are around some Denver débutante's neck now, I dare say."

"I suppose you could still lodge the information against Mrs. La Shelle, if the case is as you say," he answered

coldly; "and still redeem yourself in the important eyes of Mr. Jaffray!"

She flashed a look of anger at him, but vouchsafed no answer, no further explanation of her association with Mr. Jaffray, no hint of regret over that association, no promise of amendment. So they parted with a stiffness, which not even the breeziness of the newspaper woman, coming in for tea, or the chirping pleasantness of Mrs. Birdsong concerning the delights of a week on the Denisons' ranch, could render anything but noticeable. And when Gerald bowed himself out of the apartment, he bade Mrs. Birdsong good-by. She was to return to Kentucky in three weeks, and he would not see her again, he said. The newspaper woman suppressed a whistle with considerable skill, and Mrs. Birdsong made no attempt to suppress a sigh. But the only sign of feeling which Kathleen had the slightest difficulty in suppressing was a look of relief.

Gerald had hoped for some better result from his threat; for it was as a threat that he had intended his remark. Since the better result had not been forthcoming, he put in a miserable fortnight, seeing sights to whose magnificence he gave only an ungrateful, passing glance. The invitation to the Denisons' had not been until the third week; although he had sought to soften Kathleen's proud heart by making her think it an immediate one.

He found the Denison house—great, rambling structure, miraculously comfortable inside, in spite of the miles between it and any of the outposts of civilization—in a state of wild excitement. A hunt was on, to be sure, but not after the game which Gerald had been invited to shoot.

"It's the rustlers. We've got them this time!" Mr. Denison announced energetically to Gerald.

Then he explained that rustlers were gentlemen with a penchant for remaking the brands on their neighbors' cattle—cattle thieves, in short. He told of a gang that had been supposedly broken up two years before, but that was apparently reforming.

"But we think we've got them dead to rights this time," he proclaimed, and told of a bad men's camp located within ten or fifteen miles of his own place.

"Young Gilroy was seen limping about at Iron Kettle the other day," he said to one of his sons-in-law.

"That's enough!" replied the young man laconically. "That crooked son of iniquity couldn't walk straight to save his life. He's bad for the sheer joy of it."

Could this crooked Gilroy, Gerald wanted to know, be by any coincidence, the same young man as one who was giving some trouble in Bluevale, Kentucky, a few months ago.

"The very same!" cried old Mr. Denison.

"When you say that there was a young Gilroy making trouble, you have sufficiently identified him," said Mason, a son-in-law. "But when you add 'Bluevale,' you've clinched the matter. He alternates between the two places. He has some sort of a hold over Kathleen Fletcher, and he follows her on there whenever he feels like it. He's done that for the past ten or fifteen years; and I imagine they know him at Bluevale as well as we know him here. But he's as slippery as an eel."

"A hold over Miss Fletcher?" Gerald heard himself repeating the sinister words.

"Oh, I fancy the dear girl likes him a little. I can see no other explanation. Don't look so shocked, Mr. Cromartin. It's no reflection upon Kathleen. We all know her and admire her, hot-headed little fanatic though she is! But it's always your good, saintly women who are fond of ne'er-do-wells."

The conversation drifted on, past the point of Kathleen Fletcher's feelings for the young man whose neck, as far as Gerald could make out, was in some danger of the noose. But he was depressed, downcast, by all that he had heard. It was with no zest of adventure that he started out with his hosts and a posse of sheriff's men the next morning before daybreak—all deputies for the occasion—to try to surround the camp of the thieves.

They had divided into several detachments, following different trails and spurs. Gerald was too oppressed by the thought that the chief quarry they sought was the lad who might be—might be?—who was undoubtedly dear to Kathleen Fletcher, to appreciate the wonders of that early morning ride—the gaunt magnificence of the peaks towering above them, the cold, green beauty of the tracks through which they rode.

They were out on a man hunt; and the man whom they especially hunted was one dear to the woman he, Gerald Cromartin, loved. To think that he had come out of Ireland, heart whole, fancy free, an idler of the idlers, to be made over in this strange fashion, to fall in love, deeply, irrevocably, unhappily, with an inexplicable girl who could give him none of the treasure of her affection! To think that he, Gerald Cromartin, who, if he had not always expected to have what he wanted, when the time came, at least expected to suffer very little from denial, to think that he should find himself of the same substance with all the unhappy lovers of the world! He hadn't supposed it was in him to have that sort of a sentiment.

As he ended this line of reflection, he saw, with immediate concern, that he had let his companions ride beyond his sight. He shouted, but apparently they were beyond earshot also. There came no answer. It served him jolly well right for mooning along like a lovesick calf, he told himself angrily. Now what should he do—alone, to all practical intents and purposes, in the Rocky Mountains, with no trail visible to eyes untrained in forestry?

Ahead of him was a narrow, sheltered, green valley. On two sides, sheer cliffs cut it off from the world. On a third, a level plateau bounded it. Gerald stood, as it were, at the only entrance to it. Suddenly his keen eyes made out, backed against the cliff and colored like it, a sort of a shack.

He felt a great relief, and rode swiftly forward. If this was a settler's cabin, he could undoubtedly win guidance back to his party. But he had not ridden half

the distance to the shanty when a shot whistled by his ear. It was a warning not to come too close, which he felt it wise to acknowledge by bringing his horse to an immediate stop.

From the gray shack, a gray figure detached itself, and came—limping, yet with a wonderful speed—toward Cromartin. He remembered what he had heard of Gilroy's gait at Bluevale. He knew now where he was—in the very camp for which the posse was searching.

At the command which the advancing figure made, enforcing it with a significant gesture from his pistol, Gerald threw up his hands. The insolent lame boy came close. Gerald looked down into a handsome, bronzed face, into a pair of daring, cruel, laughing, hazel eyes.

"What do you want here?" demanded the man from the shack.

"I've lost my way," replied Gerald. "I was with a party—and, to tell the truth, I think we were riding after you and your gang—that is, if I am right in thinking you Tom Gilroy?"

"I'm Tom Gilroy, all right, and you've got the advantage of me. You're not so well known in my set as I seem to be in yours."

"I'm a stranger here—Cromartin is my name."

"Well, Mr. Cromartin, you can take your choice of two things, since you are a stranger here. You can let me tie a handkerchief around your eyes and lead you out to the point where you lost the trail, or you can be shot. It would be easier for me to shoot you; but you've done me a service in letting me know that the gang of fatheads is out after me, and I'm willing to pay you for it."

"I should prefer the blindfolding, since you're so kind as to give me my choice. And—not as a return courtesy, but solely on account of a young lady who seems to be concerned in your fate—I shall not reveal your whereabouts for four or five hours after I rejoin my party."

"You mean Kathie, I suppose," said young Gilroy, with a satisfaction which made Gerald long to break his head. "All right—it's a go. And you can tell your friends, the Denison fatheads, that the gang they're so worried about consists of just one poor lame man."

He looked up swaggeringly. Then he added:

"Sweet on Kathie yourself, eh?"

Gerald tried to catch him with a spurred boot, but the other leaped nimbly out of his range.

"I'm a fool to bandy words with you," said Gerald. "Lead me out, if you're going to!"

Then, as a bandage was knotting around his eyes, he added:

"Have you the pawn ticket for that ruby ring she gave you in Bluevale, the morning after you fired Hathaway's barns?"

"Who the devil are you?"

"Never mind! Have you the pawn ticket?"

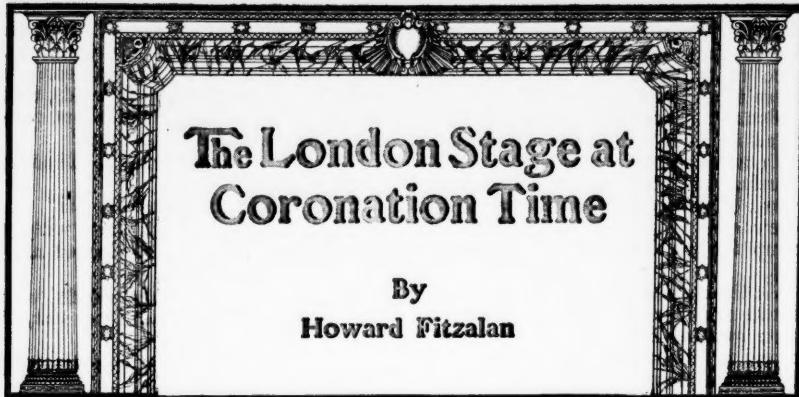
"Yes. What will you give me for it?"

"Whatever you got on the ring."

"I always meant to give it back to her, she was so game about it," said the boy. "But you're a lot more likely to than I—and it's cheaper for me this way. Here it is—a hundred plunks, please."

The transfer was effected, the bandaging completed. In a few minutes Gerald was back in his forest trail again; and high above him toiled the ascending figures of his companions. He was about to be guilty of a bad breach of hospitality; but he had deferred punishment for the boy Kathleen—loved, was it? And he was going to be able to send her back her ring—she would be wearing it again within a week!

She would think that Gilroy had sent it—it would increase her tenderness toward him. Never mind! She would have her ring; and, whatever she thought, it would be to him, to him, Gerald, that she would owe it!



The London Stage at Coronation Time

By
Howard Fitzalan

ONE left New York a staring wilderness of boarded-up theaters, around each of which an aura of heat had gradually formed; and arrived in London to don dress clothes and an overcoat again, and took one's customary place in front of many foot-lights.

Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, East Indians, and all of London's provincial cousins, crowded one on every side. They had all come to jam the hotels for coronation time, and make things unpleasantly expensive for regular visitors like us. Of Americans, there were fewer than there are generally at that time of the year; the high prices had frightened them away; and it was just as well, for, if there had been any more people in London, I should not now be writing this; for there would have been no room in the theaters for dramatic reviewers.

As it was, it was only by the combined influence of many that I got in to see "The Count of Luxembourg," which is by the composer of "The Merry Widow," and which is running at Daly's Theater, where that great success held forth for two years. More than that, Lily Elsie, who had the titular rôle of "The Widow," is prima donna extraordinary of this one also. The Elsie person is somewhat of a phenomenon; she is pretty, and well groomed; besides

which she sings, acts, and dances all remarkably well. Huntley Wright is his usual comic self; and a new comedian, a W. H. Berry, makes himself noticeable in a low-comedy rôle.

Of course, when "Luxembourg" is mentioned, every one immediately asks about "that famous staircase waltz." The plain fact of the matter is that two people waltz up a flight of stairs; there is nothing particularly striking about it, and it cannot be compared in merit with many other bits of "business" in the piece. Nor is the music that of a second "Merry Widow"; but it is tuneful and dainty, and all London is whistling it.

Stanislas Stange, who saw the piece on the Continent, tells me that "the staircase waltz" then was quite different, and really exceedingly effective; but the sort of comedy it represented was adjudged unfit, from the Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, and so the waltz was emasculated.

The story of "The Count of Luxembourg" is equally responsible with the music for its success. A grand duke wishes to marry an actress, but, by the laws governing the grand ducal conduct, cannot do so unless she is ennobled. So he picks out an impecunious nobleman, one René of Luxembourg, who consents to give the lady his name for a certain sum necessary to

pay his debts. They are married with a screen between them, so that neither sees the face of the other. He, according to his contract, then disappears, so that she can claim a divorce on the ground of having been brutally deserted at the altar.

Just before the divorce is granted, they meet, and neither knowing the other's identity, fall in love; so that the grand duke does not get his bride, after all. It is a piece abounding in good situations, staged and acted splendidly. It will be seen in New York probably before Christmas.

"THE QUAKER GIRL."

"The Quaker Girl" is another piece which will have an early American première, inaugurating the season at the Majestic Theater, which passes to new managers, who intend to make it a home for musical comedy. In London it has run all season at the Adelphi Theater, and has also been seen in Paris at the Châtelet, with our old friend Joseph Coyne in the leading male part and Gertie Millar in the title rôle.

The music is in Lionel Monckton's best vein, and the book tells of the adventures of a little "Friend" as a *mannequin* for a Paris dressmaker; a *mannequin* being, as almost everybody knows, a young and beautiful person hired to wear her employers' creations in public—at the races, the theaters, and other places where crowds gather.

There is a striking second-act climax which is good enough for a play without music, when *Prudence*, to save her friend *The Princess* from identification and deportation from France, consents to attend a somewhat sensational ball to which her fiancé has forbidden her to go.

Lucy Weston will have the Millar part when Harris & McKee put it on here, and it is very probable that Clifton Crawford will impersonate the part of the young American diplomat played here by Coyne. Coyne's popularity remains unabated in London. It is not likely that we of the States will ever have him with us permanently again.

"PEGGY."

George Grossmith, junior, spent some time with us a few years ago when Charles Frohman brought him over to appear with Hattie Williams in "Fluffy Ruffles." He, therefore, did not have the courage to make the principal character of this French adaptation—a roaring, swearing, heavily bearded, knife-carrying person—a citizen of the United States. He blamed him on Buenos Aires, although in the original he was one of us. In spite of all we can do, the bulk of the middle classes of France and England still believe we hunt the buffalo in the streets of Chicago and shoot the grizzly bear in Central Park.

Also the hallucination continues to exist that we are all mere conveyances for money. However, the tide is turning. South America will now have its turn to be slandered.

I went to see the piece with Richard Carle, who, some time during the present season, hopes to present it in New York. Give him the opening choruses, finales, and a framework on which to hang his own drolleries and songs, and that is all he needs, as he proved in "The Spring Chicken," another Gaiety piece. No doubt Carle will interpolate songs and situations of his own invention sufficient to carry the piece to American popularity; but, produced in New York as I saw it here, it would have small chance of success.

The music by Leslie Stuart is not in his best vein, and the biggest hit is an interpolated American number, "What Has Become of the Girls I Used to Know," which was used in New York in "The Bachelor Belles." George Grossmith is responsible for the English version, and also plays one of the leading parts; but, as he does not wear "Johnnie" clothes and a monocle, is not nearly so good as usual. The part played by Edmund (once Teddy) Payne, *Alfred Humbles*, a barber, is a typical Carle rôle, and that is why Richard is taking the piece; that is, if the English authors do not consider it worth more than the framework and a few musical numbers are worth.

A RENAISSANCE OF SHAW.

When New York theatergoers drop in to see "The Chocolate Soldier," which is still running here, they are surprised to find that the characters they knew as *Bluntschli*, *Louka*, *Sergius*, et cetera, have all been changed to other names; and on the program and all the billboards appears the following legend:

With apologies to Mr. Bernard Shaw for an unauthorized parody on one of his plays.

Shaw has repudiated all connection with "The Chocolate Soldier," and has compelled Stanislas Stange, who made the English version, to take from his libretto every line, nay, every word, that was in "Arms and the Man."

This latter piece went on at the Criterion later, introducing Arnold Daly to English theatergoers; and as there were very few in England who had seen the piece when it was first presented, a decade or more ago, it caught the Londoners' fancy for the moment, and helped to retrieve some of F. C. Whitney's losses on "Baron Trenck," which some one described as a "Bach fugue gone wrong."

"Trenck" was responsible for Whitney taking the ill-starred Strand Theater and giving it his own name. It is now closed, as usual. No one has ever made any money with this house; first the Waldorf, then the Shubert, then the Strand, and, finally, the Whitney—no name has changed its luck.

The third piece to be connected with Bernard Shaw is "Fanny's First Play," originally produced anonymously at The Little Theater, which is Shaw strictly as a comedian, and not at all to be taken seriously. Shaw has a part interest in The Little Theater, I am told, along with Granville Barker and Lillah McCarthy. Some Americans claim that Shaw quarreled with Arnold Daly purposely, so as to break his agreement that Daly was to use a Shaw repertoire of plays in London each year; as Shaw wanted his plays for his own theater.

However, quarrel they did, Shaw and Daly, but as the great St. Bernard has quarreled with every one, and the other

hot-headed Irishman, Daly, to wit, has, if not quite so long a record, one just as consistent in the quarreling matter, that was to be expected, and Shaw says, "Arms and the Man," as presented by Daly, is not in the spirit he wrote it. Daly admits this, but claims it is in a better spirit. So now the two Irishmen communicate through the mails.

OTHER PLAYS.

Speaking of quarrels, they are waging a merry one over the Gaiety Theater. George Edwardes, king of English musical comedy, and stepfather of all the Gaiety girls—which means half the ladies in the English peerage—has incurred the dislike of Frank Gould, who owns fifteen thousand shares of stock in the Gaiety Theater company; so Frank is trying to oust Edwardes, and make the Gaiety an American institution. Of course, every one thinks it is to put his wife, once Edith Kelly and a former chorus girl at the Gaiety, in the leading parts; but this is flatly denied. However, theatrical folk are watching the outcome with an interest little short of that aroused by the coronation.

"Kismet," an Oriental play laid a thousand years back, in which Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton are appearing, and C. Haddon Chambers' new piece, "Passers-By," were the two worthiest of the more serious plays—excepting those Shawian ones—to be seen by the coronation visitors; but as both are booked for a New York hearing, I will leave extended notice of them until then.

This year's London output has not been a particularly good one, and New York will not be worried by many of them. More and more the Londoners are looking toward us for assistance in the entertainment problem, and we, thank Heaven, have long ceased to be dependent upon them. The coronation has had something to do with the theatrical lack of success this year, of course; now that it is over, restaurant proprietors and theatrical entrepreneurs breathe a sigh of relief.

What the Editor Has to Say

HERE never was a time when pens, paper, ink, and typewriter ribbon were cheaper than they are at present, nor when more people put them to use or misuse in attempts to produce literature. On the whole, also, in spite of what admirers of the past say to the contrary, there never was a time when the general standard of current fiction as published in books and periodicals was as high as now. In spite of this, really memorable, worth-while books are rare as ever. Notwithstanding the great number of really good and readable stories, the book that is worth reading a second time, that you like to keep and remember, that you are not too willing to lend, is just as rare as ever. It doesn't happen once a year or once every two years.

WE read recently one of these rare, delightful stories. It is the latest novel by Mrs. Helen R. Martin. It is called "The Fighting Doctor." It will appear serially in SMITH'S MAGAZINE, and you will have the first large installment in a month from now. Mrs. Martin is already well known as the author of "Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," and "When Half-Gods Go," both published in book form by the Century Company. This new story of hers is the first to appear serially in any magazine. It is undoubtedly the best work she has ever done, and is also without question the best serial story you are likely to read in any magazine for some time. It is a really big American novel. It has in it a quality that will interest

any one—man, woman, or child—who starts it. It comes very close to the actual facts of human life, human nature, and experience. It is not often that any magazine gets a story as big as this to talk about. You'll be talking about it yourself before you have read more than one installment.

"THE Fighting Doctor" is a story of Pennsylvania and "the Pennsylvania Dutch." The central figure is a nice girl, of genuine character and ability, of good education and refined instincts, who finds herself teaching school in the center of a community of the most primitive, conservative people in the world. They misunderstand almost everything she does or says, and the "Fighting Doctor," who is trying to let a little moral sunshine and fresh air into a hotbed of political and civic corruption, misunderstands her as well. There are stories of character and stories of incident. This is both. Moreover, it is a story of to-day, of real people, and actual conditions.

"THE short stories in the next number of the magazine are on a par with the new serial. They are by Louise Morgan Sill, Martha MacCulloch-Williams, Marie Manning, Anne O'Hagan, Virginia Middleton, Charles Battell Loomis, and Hildegard Lavender. All these names mean something to you in the way of good fiction, and these are only a few of the things in an unusually strong number of the magazine.



On the Care of the Nails

By Dr. Lillian Whitney

PERFECTLY kept nails are indicative of culture, good breeding, and refinement. We have strayed far from the sentiment of the Roman emperor who publicly rebuked what he termed the poppery of his day, and who dwelt with pride on the length of his nails and the inky blackness of his hands. We regard soiled hands as a breach of good manners, and unkempt nails are unpardonable in good society.

The nails are to the hands what the teeth are to the mouth. The most exquisitely chiseled lips lose their beauty if the teeth do not conform to them; and the ugliest hand speaks eloquently of the refinement of its possessor when it gives evidence of care by its appearance and the beauty of its nails.

Not every one can procure the services of a professional manicure to keep them in good condition, as they require trimming weekly and careful grooming daily; but all can supply themselves with the few essentials required for simple manicuring; and boys and girls should be taught early in life the use of these little implements so that the habit is formed and the need for perfectly kept nails as acutely felt as in that of the tooth and hairbrush.

Inexpensive manicure cases contain very poor instruments. It is far more economical and profitable to fit out one's own case. Girls, especially when attending boarding school, use a pretty box of some sort in which to keep the outfit, consisting of curved cuticle scissors, a good flexible file, a package of

orange-wood sticks, some emery boards, a small roll of absorbent cotton, a bottle of nail bleach, nail paste and powder, a large buffer, and a good nail brush.

The nails are exquisitely sensitive; for this reason they respond quickly to good treatment. They show neglect very plainly, and they are easily injured by rough, awkward, and hurried management.

Therefore, in manicuring, plenty of time, patience, and a dainty touch are essentials to success. The methods of professional manicures differ; in fact, no two pursue this work in precisely the same manner. Some soften the nails before trimming them, others trim them first. Leaving the finger tips in water too long makes the nail very pliable, so that it cannot be filed satisfactorily; while some nails are very dry, and brittle, and break off easily unless they have been softened first.

The little nail bath is prepared with warm water and perfumed liquid soap in a glass bowl. Nails that are unaccustomed to good care would better be given a five minutes' preliminary bath —only one hand at a time. If the skin has grown up around the base, covering completely the little crescent usually noted there, it is well to rub a drop of almond oil or some cold cream into them, too.

If the nails are unusually long, they will have to be clipped with the nail scissors, although this is poor practise, and it tends to thicken them. If possible, never use the scissors upon the

nail itself, only the file. The nail should be shaped in conformity with the finger tip; long, clawlike nails are vulgar.

After they have been filed down to the desired length, they are smoothed and beveled off with an emery board. This is very important, as they are otherwise likely to be sharp and rough. Among the Romans, the free edge of the nails became the criterion of smoothness. In running it over the surface of an object, the slightest roughness could be detected; hence arose the expression, "true to the nail," as indicative of perfection.

Fragments of skin, especially in the corners of the nail, are now removed with the curved

scissors. A bit of cotton is wound around the tip of an orange stick, dipped in nail bleach, and carefully traced between the nail and finger, to remove all foreign matter and stains.

If this bleach is too strong, it may irritate and inflame the tender skin. No pressure should be exerted; and, in freeing the corners, the greatest caution must be taken, otherwise the skin is cut or broken, and bleeding of the part follows.

Hydrogen peroxide is frequently employed for bleaching the nails. It is not as good as some other things. The commonest formula in use consists of:

Oxalic acid.....1 dram
Rose water.....2 ounces

The base of the nail now claims attention. If the skin has grown up and is very dry and light, the fingers must be held in the bath until the cuticle has become sufficiently softened to come away with ease. Press it down very

gently with the broad end of an orange stick. In badly neglected hands, it is necessary to trim off the overgrown skin with the cuticle scissors; but this must not be done often, as it stimulates its growth. After the nails have been regularly cared for, a little film of skin is all that forms at the base of the nail, and, by pressing it back every day with a soft towel in drying the hands, it can be kept nicely under control.

Nails that are very dry and around which the skin is apt to grow heavily, should be rubbed very thoroughly at bedtime with cold cream. This softens and nourishes as well. One sometimes sees the flesh encircling the nails thickened and reddened, especially upon some young manicures.

It is caused by the too zealous desire of displaying the crescents, which are regarded as a mark of beauty. Do not force back the flesh, only the skin; and, if it should so happen

that your nails are not as well marked with this tiny half moon as you would

like, be convinced that no one is aware of it but yourself, and do not call unpleasant attention to the nails by making the fingers unsightly. Some nails are so deeply imbedded in the flesh that these crescents never show.

It is difficult to keep this variety in good condition. For them the following will be found valuable:

NAIL CREAM AND CLEANSER.

Powdered Castile soap.....	1 dram
Oil of bergamot.....	3 drops
Petrolatum	1 ounce

We have now reached the polishing stage in our manicuring. To follow professional methods, the nails are anointed with white vaseline after they



Trace the nail-bleach carefully between finger and nail.

have all been carefully trimmed. They are then scrubbed in the little bath with a good nail brush, carefully wiped of all moisture, and polished. Some use both paste and powder. A very small amount of paste, about the size of a pin-head, is spread over the nail, which is then rubbed briskly with the chamois buffer; another buffer is used for the powder, which may be loose or in cake form. A small quantity is put on the buffer, and the nails gently polished. Too much polishing thickens the nail. Finally they are gone over with the warm palm, which brings out their natural luster. It is the delicate shell pink of a healthy nail that makes it beautiful. The high polish imparted to it by red pastes is objectionable to the cultivated eye.

Staining the nails is barbaric and semibarbaric. The Asiatics, for instance, stain their finger tips with henna. Using the red paste once a week is quite sufficient. The following formula is one of the best:

Eosin	40 grains
White wax.....	2 drams
Spermaceti	2 drams
Paraffin wax.....	4 ounces

Melt the waxes at a gentle heat and stir in the eosin, which should be in a very fine powder, or dissolved in a very small amount of alcohol. In the latter case, the heat must be continued until all the alcohol has evaporated.

A nail powder that is largely in use consists of:

Powdered pumice stone.....	2 ounces
Powdered talcum	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Mix thoroughly, and add:	
Carmine	15 grains
Oil of rose.....	3 drops



Remove fragments of cuticle with curved scissors.

Brittle nails are a source of extreme annoyance. They break off at the most inopportune moments, when one's hands are on dress parade usually. The following paste is highly recommended to overcome the trouble:

Oil of pistache.....	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Refined table salt.....	$\frac{1}{2}$ dram
Powdered resin.....	$\frac{1}{2}$ dram
Powdered alum.....	$\frac{1}{2}$ dram
White wax.....	$\frac{1}{4}$ drams
Carmine (if desired).....	$\frac{1}{4}$ drams

A beauty specialist declares that filing the nails regularly every week prevents them from becoming brittle. There is some truth in this, because filing stimulates their growth, and therefore nourishes them.

Nails become brittle through disease, especially in disorders of the blood and nervous troubles. In very severe organic diseases, they may drop off simply from lack of nourishment. Gouty and rheumatic people are usually troubled with affections of the nails. They lose their polish, become ridged and furrowed, or they have a tendency to split and break. Various occupations destroy the beauty of the nails. Confectioners, for instance, and especially makers of candied fruit, suffer from dry, dark, and brittle nails as a result of dipping them in sweet, sour, and hot solutions.

The freak growth of a nail reminds one of the fakirs of India, who throughout a lifetime never trim their nails; and they attain an unconscionable length. Now and then one sees an exaggeratedly long nail upon the small finger. Its purpose cannot be imagined, for it is quite the opposite to good-looking. Overgrowth of the nails

may be spontaneous, however—the result of disease. The underlying cause must be sought and removed. An ointment of salicylic acid applied locally sometimes helps.

The health of nails is greatly improved by tonics, as they quickly reflect one's physical condition.

The nails are also subject to diseases peculiar to themselves, and, although they are apparently entirely destroyed, if the true condition is recognized and proper treatment pursued, they may be restored by having the disease arrested and future growth assured.

They grow more rapidly in summer than in winter, and in childhood than in old age. The time required for the thumb nail to grow out its full length is usually about five months. It takes four times as long for the great toe nail to attain full growth; but, despite this, it is well worth giving apparently hopeless nails every care, for nothing is more disfiguring than misshapen, crip-

pled, or deformed nails. Five minutes pedicuring upon the toe nails after the daily bath will keep them in good condition, and add much to the beauty, comfort, and health of the feet.

The shape of the finger tips, and, therefore, of the nails, may be greatly improved by pinching the flesh away from the nail bed, and thus tapering the ends of the fingers. Of course,

fingers that taper delicately, and nails that are filbert-shaped, are the most beautiful.

Occasional massage and pinching will not help. They can only be remodeled with the care of a lifetime. French women use a device for this purpose which is called a "nail clipper." It is made of metal, and resembles a tiny clothespin. This is extreme, and the same ends can be reached by devoting a few minutes every day, whenever one happens to think of it, to training the soft structures of the finger tips into greater shapeliness.



Pinching the nails and finger tips into shape.

Answers to Correspondents

DAISY.—Liquid soap and soap jelly are two distinct preparations. I will give you both.

LIQUID SOAP.

Powdered green Castile soap.
Glycerine.

Alcohol.
Of each, 1 ounce.

SOAP JELLY.

Scrape an ordinary size cake of pure, white, Spanish Castile soap into a quart of boiling water in which has been dissolved a piece of washing soda the size of a walnut; allow it to simmer until it thickens, when boil and set away to cool.

Z.—Your letter is extremely interesting. I have never heard that pumice or similar

organic preparations, such as fine sand soaps, will in time attenuate the hands. I would suggest that you rub them as often as you can with lanolin, which is wool fat, and at night wear gloves that you have smeared thickly with this ointment:

Lanolin.

Coconut butter.

Olive oil—of each, two ounces.

Make into an ointment.

ELLA B.—Apply the following every night with a camel's hair brush. After a week's use you can lift the corn out:

Borax of sodium.....	1 dram
Extract cannabis Indica.....	30 grains
Collodion	1 ounce

NANETTE.—You cannot remove brown

spots overnight. Here is a bleaching lotion which you must apply *gingerly* to the spots; and when they become irritated, stop for a day or two, then begin again:

Lactic acid.....	2 ounces
Glycerine	1 ounce
Orange flower water.....	½ ounce

B. H.—I am glad my advice has helped your friends, but regret that requests through this column cannot be answered under two or three months. There is a remedy for your trouble in *Vaucaire Tonic*. The formula consists of:

Liquid extract of galega (goat's rue)	10 grams
Lacto phosphate of lime.....	10 grams
Tincture of fennel.....	10 grams
Simple sirup.....	400 grams

Dose: Two tablespoonfuls in water before each meal.

DENVER, COLO.—Devote ten to fifteen minutes each night before retiring to the toilet of your face, and you will soon note a great improvement. Apply the following cream, which must be thoroughly rubbed in to prove effective:

Oil of sweet almonds.....	½ ounce
Boracic acid.....	40 drops
Tincture of benzoin.....	10 drops
Lanolin	1 ounce

CLOTILDE.—It would require a book to answer your many questions. Read the articles as they appear each month carefully, and they will tell you all you wish to know.

EVANS.—Hair has a tendency to become darker with increasing years. I do not blame you for wishing to preserve the brilliancy of your auburn locks. Try this, which is a favorite with some foreign beauty specialists:

FOR FADED AUBURN LOCKS.

Sulphate of iron.....	1 dram
Claret	6 ounces

The iron is dissolved in the wine, and applied frequently to the hair with a small brush.

JOHN.—I know how discouraging an intractable case of acne is; even dermatologists find themselves "up a tree" now and then over a case that refuses to yield to any treatment. Recently we have found that by building up the blood with irontropon, and applying drying lotions locally, a cure ultimately results. Here is a drying lotion for acne:

Sulphur	3 drams
Spirits of camphor.....	1 dram
Lime water.....	3 ounces

Daub on with absorbent cotton, allowing it to dry into the skin.

L. R.—Many inquiries come to me for

Dr. Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

putty powders. The directions for making them are very intricate, and a novice in this work would be sure to make a failure of it. With my knowledge of pharmaceutical matters I should leave this to an expert. Here is a liquid powder which you can make, and it may suit your purpose:

Pure oxide of zinc.....	1 ounce
Glycerine	1 dram
Rose water.....	4 ounces

Perfume to taste.

Pour the glycerine over the zinc oxide until a paste is formed, then slowly add the water and perfume. It must be well shaken before using, and is applied on soft linen. Do not allow it to remain on the face all night.

HEBE.—The rings induced by wearing high collars can be removed with this mild bleach:

Borax	1 dram
Lemon juice.....	2 drams
Bay rum.....	2 ounces
Rose water.....	2 ounces

JENNIE.—For a "horribly discolored neck" you will have to use more heroic measures than the mild bleach given Hebe. Try this: Citrine ointment.....½ dram Oil of sweet almonds.....½ dram Spermaceti ointment.....3 drams Perfume.

Thin the two ointments with the oil, spread the resulting paste on linen, and apply to the neck. This may irritate the skin, but it is the only way it can be successfully bleached. If it becomes painful remove the paste and apply cold cream.

MARY.—The following is one of the most elegant preparations known for improving the skin:

HANOVER COSMETIC POWDER.

Sweet almonds, blanched.....	18 ounces
Dried ripe beans.....	18 ounces
Orris root.....	8 ounces
White castile soap.....	6 ounces
Spermaceti	½ ounce
Dried carbonate of soda.....	1 ounce
Oil of bergamot.....	6 drams
Oil of lavender.....	6 drams
Oil of lemon.....	6 drams

Grind and beat the dried ingredients to a powder. Beat in the oils until absorbed. Keep in closed jars. One-half or one-fourth this amount can be made. It cleanses, whitens, and softens the skin.

IRA.—The following mouth wash is also good for receding gums:

Salol	8 grains
Alcohol	8 grains
Tincture of cinnamon.....	90 drops
Oil of mint.....	4 drops

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This is wrong. Every woman can and ought to be beautiful. Every woman can retain her charm of face. Every woman should do so.

POMPEIAN *Massage Cream*

changes the whole situation. If today, as you glance into the mirror, and decide that you do want your privilege of beauty—Pompeian will give it to you. It will change a sallow skin into one clear, fresh and youthful.

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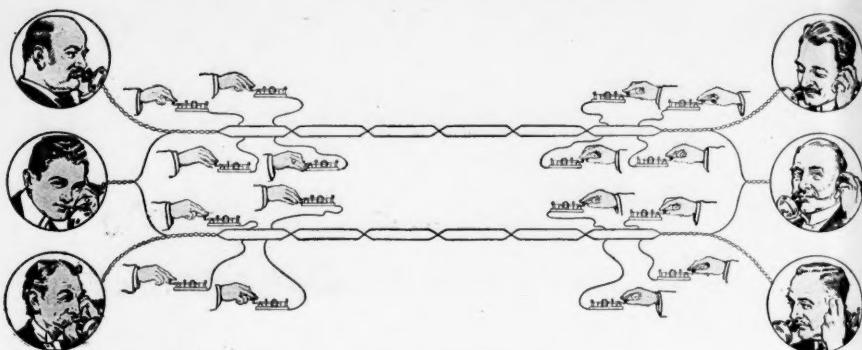
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Double Tracking The Bell Highway

Two of the greatest factors in modern civilization—the telephone and telegraph—now work hand in hand. Heretofore each was a separate and distinct system and transmitted the spoken or written messages of the nation with no little degree of efficiency. Co-operation has greatly increased this efficiency.

The simple diagram above strikingly illustrates one of the mechanical advantages of co-operation. It shows that six persons can now talk over two pairs of wires *at the same time* that eight telegraph operators send eight telegrams *over the same wires*. With such joint use of equipment there is economy; without it, waste.

While there is this joint use of trunk line plant by both companies, the telephone and telegraph services are distinct and

different. The telephone system furnishes a circuit and lets you do your own talking. It furnishes a highway of communication. The telegraph company, on the other hand, receives your message and then transmits and delivers it without your further attention.

The telegraph excels in carrying the big load of correspondence between distant centers of population; the telephone connects individuals, so that men, women and children can carry on direct conversations.

Already the co-operation of the Western Union and the Bell Systems has resulted in better and more economical public service. Further improvements and economies are expected, until time and distance are annihilated by the universal use of electrical transmission for written or personal communication.



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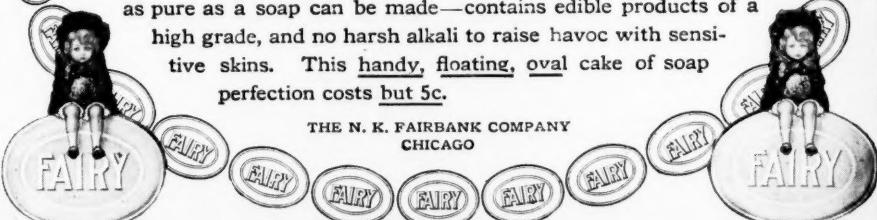
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